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# LAL BAHADUR

## D. R. MANKEKAR

LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI was a 'little' man succeeding to a big job when he became the Prime Minister of India. But in his short yet eventful career as Prime Minister he rose to great heights to tackle grave problems facing the country and earned universal respect and admiration. His triumph at Tashkent revealed the qualities of a great statesman; but his tragic and untimely death cut short an effective leadership. People who love and admire him so much, however, know little about his life and career, of the influences and factors that shaped his personality, because of his self effacing nature.

Now in this first and only political biography of Lal Bahadur Shastri an attempt is made to trace his political career, bringing the story to a close with his sad demise at Tashkent. The narrative is set in a broader and wider perspective, embracing significant political events and personalities that traverse the Indian stage.

This authentic and informative biography, penned by one of the senior-most journalists of India (see flap 2) is now issued as a second edition. His sources are first hand—several interviews with Lal Bahadur Shastri, his written replies to an exhaustive questionnaire, fund of information gathered from his intimate and life-long friends. The book also throws a flood of light on the less known aspects of the life of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

*Photo* : T. S. SATYAN

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# LAL BAHADUR

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D. R. MANKEKAR

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TO

**KAMLA**

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

ANOTHER title for this book would be "THE POST-NEHRU ERA OPENS". For, this volume attempts to portray the life and career of Lal Bahadur Shastri on a broader and wider canvas, embracing the events and personalities that traverse the stage.

The opening months of the post-Nehru era are a significant period that wellnigh constitute a watershed in India's modern history.

After seventeen or more long years of tutelage, Indian polity, cut adrift from the Nehru apron-strings, staggered to its feet and found, to its great relief, it could stand up by itself and walk unaided. In the process, it might lurch this side and that, but taking a long-range view and a historical perspective, this writer has no doubt that it would move forward and progress and steer clear of the shoals and the reefs.

In other words, with the passing of Nehru, Indian politics came of age. This historic and exhilarating moment deserves, for its own sake, to be recorded and commemorated.

The notion of the meek inheriting the earth, one imagined, was confined to the realm of the spirit. This writer has felt intrigued and fascinated by the phenomenon of the meek capturing the honours in the crass realm of cynical politics, where normally humility is a grave handicap rather than an advantage.

The author therefore seeks the permission of the reader to depart from the normal practice of a straight narration of the life story of the subject and approaches it from the angle of trying to find out what made Lal Bahadur what he is—of tracing the major influences that licked this unique personality of Indian politics into shape.

In the course of this narrative, in many places, Lal Bahadur is quoted directly. These quotations have been picked up

largely from a series of personal interviews with the Prime Minister and also from the written answers that he was kind enough to furnish in reply to a lengthy questionnaire submitted to him by this writer.

The author must here express his gratitude to the Prime Minister for finding time, in the midst of days packed with public engagements and interviews, to dictate answers to 50 questions, some of them very personal. He had to work on the answers to the questions mostly late in the night, after he had retired to bed.

The Prime Minister was also kind enough to go through more than half of the manuscript, covering the latter part of his political career and events of the last thirteen years.

The author must also take this opportunity to express his thanks to Shri Tribhuvan Narayan Singh, Minister of Industry, and a life-time friend and mate of Lal Bahadurji. Shri Singh showed the author much indulgence by agreeing to meet him again and again and answering his questions and supplying the author with material relating to the earlier part of Lal Bahadurji's life and also for going through the chapters relating to that period of the Prime Minister's life.

Similarly, the author owes his thanks to a score of other sources, mostly friends who have known Lal Bahadurji intimately, and all of whose names he could not obviously enumerate here.

The author must also acknowledge thanks to friend and colleague Shri N. G. Jog for agreeing to go through the manuscript and offering helpful suggestions.

D. R. M.

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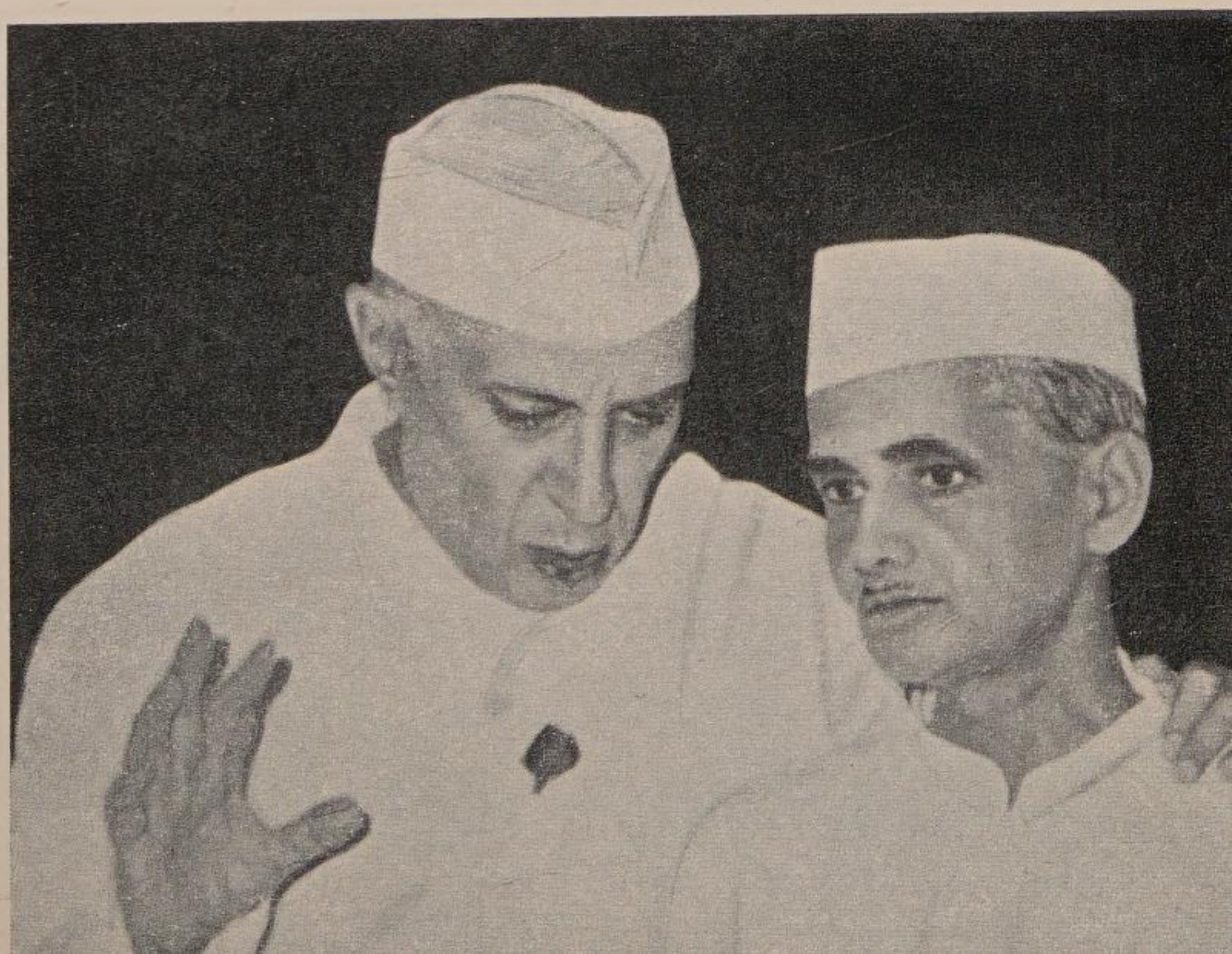
With President Radhakrishnan

With Jawaharlal Nehru

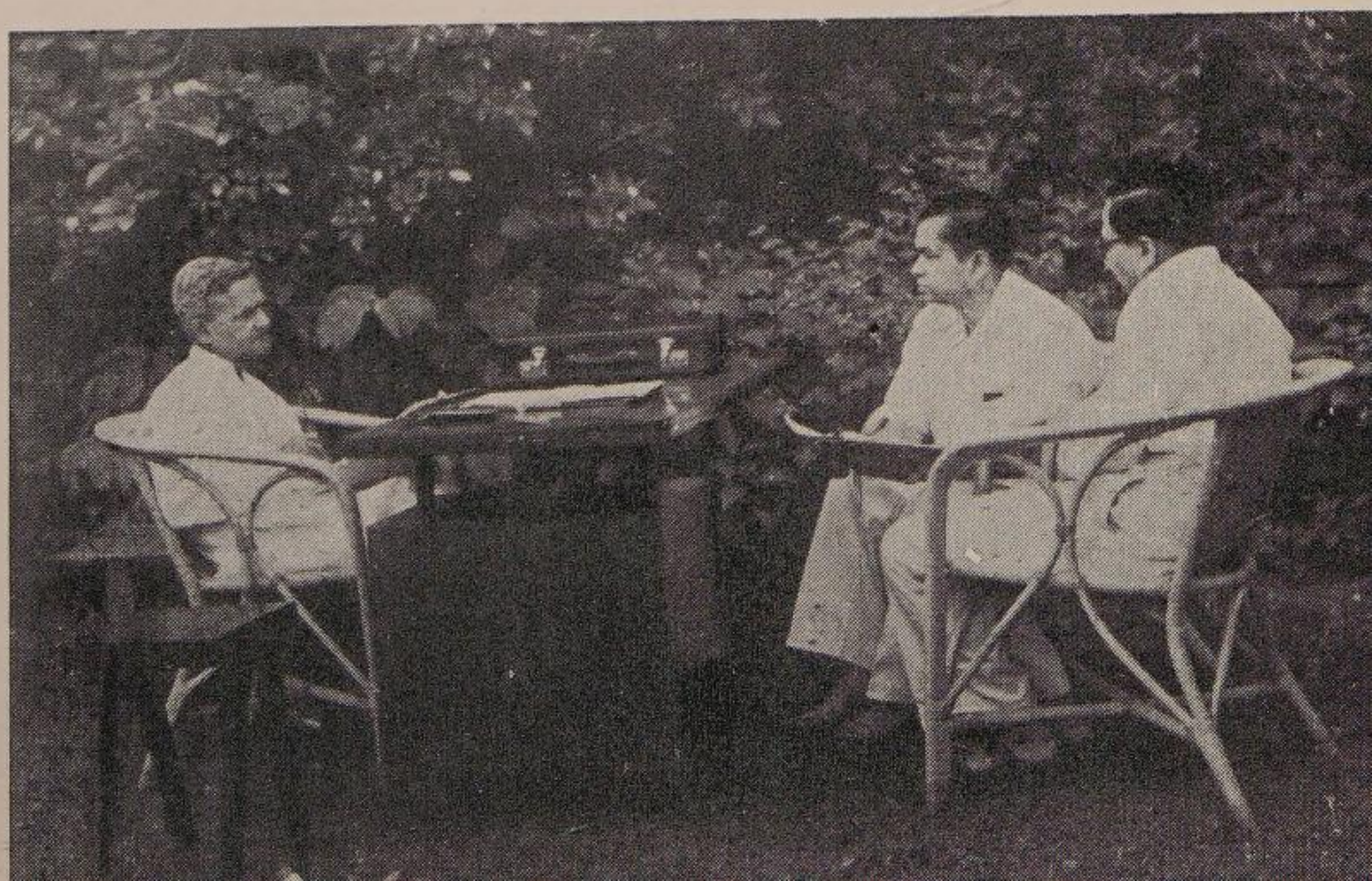


With wife Lalitadevi and mother Ramdularidevi

A family picture: Sons Ashok, Sunil, Anil, wife Lalitadevi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, daughters Kusum, Suman and son Hari Krishna. Sitting in front are grandchildren.

Prime Minister relaxing with members of his family

Working on the lawns



Lal Bahadur surf-bathing with two of his grandchildren, during his visit to Andaman Islands as Home Minister

# PROLOGUE

THE post-Nehru era opened on a confident note, belying all fears and forebodings. The eternal question 'After Nehru, who?' was at last answered, and answered with discipline, dignity and decorum.

Indeed, it seems as though with the passing of Nehru, Indian politics had attained maturity. The giant Banyan tree had fallen, but under it, contrary to belief, had sprouted lusty plants.

The transition was smooth. The Nehru rule yielded place to an integrated 'collective leadership', making for stability and solidarity of the party in power. In the supreme crisis precipitated by Nehru's sudden death, patriotism triumphed. And all omens suggested that Indian democracy would endure.

When at Bhubaneshwar, seven months earlier, Kumaraswamy Kamaraj was elected President of the Congress, Providence had already taken a hand in building up a mechanism to meet the forthcoming crisis. Almost for the first time since independence, the Congress Party got a President who was an entity by himself and nobody's stooge, a personality of high integrity, patriotism and strength of character, one who knew his mind.

His other assets are equanimity and poise; he never gets flustered in the face of difficulties. He is non-controversial and held in the highest esteem by Congressmen of all shades. His dramatic gesture offering to throw up his Chief Ministership in order to devote himself to party work had catapulted him on to the national stage. The Kamaraj Plan was no more than an enlargement of that personal proposal to the all-India scale, applied to the Congress Party as a whole.

That at this critical juncture a Southerner and a non-Brahmin, one belonging to a backward caste and the have-not class, should be unanimously elected as President of the Congress was yet another good omen. For that brought the South, the centre of the Dravida secessionist movement, firmly into the Congress, deflating the D.M.K. campaign whose main slogan is denunciation of North's domination of the South. In Kamaraj they had very much a Southerner, one of their own flesh and blood, now dominating national politics and influencing all-India policies.

Kamaraj had shown that he could hold the party together. The 'collective leadership' he sought to build into the system that succeeded the Nehru regime, integrating the Chief Ministers' support into the Central Government, whatever its other faults, was calculated to stabilise the politics of the party and the country.

But the greatest augury of all for the future was the firm foundation that Nehru himself, during his lifetime, laid for Indian democracy, which stood up so magnificently to the first major test following his death. With the present leadership at the helm, few doubt that democracy will survive in this country and tide over many a crisis in the future.

As long as the Kamaraj-Lal Bahadur axis is intact, the stability of the Government is underwritten. The most positive guarantee for that stability is Lal Bahadur Shastri's personality—his competence, his integrity, his popularity and his universal acceptability, which attract to him the backing of everyone in the party and country. He was easily the best available man in the Congress party for the Prime Ministership.

Only in a dictatorship does the leader have to nominate his successor. For, if he didn't, there would be the deluge, a scramble for power, a war of succession. Not so in a democracy, which has a built-in mechanism for choosing a successor. When a new leader was duly and unanimously elected by the Congress Parliamentary Party, Nehru's faith in the Indian people and democracy had been vindicated.

Indians, however, never had any doubt that that would be so. We never shared the apprehensions of Western observers that no sooner Nehru quit the scene than the party might

splinter and the country go to pieces, conscious though we were of the many failings of the party and of the regional and centrifugal pulls straining the integrity of the Indian Union. That was so because we, Indians, knew that the factionalism rife within the party and the 'fissiparous tendencies' obsessing the country would stop short of actual disruption.

That is, however, not to say that the Congress Party will continue to fare as well in the future elections as it did in the past when Nehru was at its helm. If, on its performance, the Congress fails to win the confidence of the electorate at the next election, it will meet the fate prescribed by democracy.

Where and how, then, did the Western observers of the Indian political scene go wrong, when they predicted dire calamity to this country on Nehru's death? In the first place, the Western observers did not have the same faith that Nehru and we had in our democracy, and were convinced that with the departure of Nehru, democracy in the country too would be rubbed off. Their conclusions were over-simplifications of their surface-impressions of the complex Indian scene, where appearances were deceptive. They had failed to see the many merging shades that intervened between black and white.

Partly the Indian press was responsible for the mis-impressions carried by Anglo-American correspondents. Taking its freedom rather seriously, it had fed them, day after day, on hyperbolic, and generally one-sided criticism of Government's lapses, failings and failures in the administration of a country and population of the size of a sub-continent and with the problems that would defy the ingenuity and resources of the most experienced administrators in the world.

In the absence of a balanced picture ready at hand presenting also the credit side of the balance-sheet, the foreign observers rushed to extreme and wrong conclusions. There was possibly an element of wishfulness, at least on the part of some of the Western commentators, who never concealed their resentment at Nehru's refusal to toe the line with the West in international affairs.

Wrote John Grigg in the *Guardian*: "While he was alive, the Western world was blind to the true greatness of Jawa-

harlal Nehru. Perhaps his death will shock people into an awareness of what his life's work has meant to the cause of freedom." He then added, "It is no easy matter to be the leader of a democracy, even when the citizens have a high standard of living and when there is a well-established tradition of unity and independence. How much more difficult when the nation is an amalgam of religions, languages and cultures, when the overwhelming mass of the people are illiterate and miserably poor."

Yet another and more important factor that distorted the Westerners' vision was their firmly-held conviction that democracy is a peculiarly Western institution which could never strike roots outside Europe and North America. The delicate plant could not flourish on the alien soil of Asia and Africa. In India democracy was no more than a veneer imposed on her by Nehru's Westernized personality—and Nehru was after all a Harrow-Cambridge educated English gentleman! Therefore, whatever success Nehru might have achieved with democracy in his land, it could not possibly endure after him. Indeed, the London "Times" commented after Nehru's death: "From now on the leaders of India would be Asians."

This conviction is so strong among the Westerners that it often blinds them to glaring evidence to the contrary—that our democracy has lived 17 long years and gone through three fair, peaceful, orderly general elections, in which the largest electorate in the world went to the polls. In most newly-liberated countries of Asia and Africa democracy eroded away in no time to be replaced by a dictatorship. Thanks to the traditions laid down by Indian nationalism, as guided by Gandhi and Nehru, the democratic way of life has taken deep roots in the country's politics.

The fear now expressed in the Western press is that the unity displayed at the election of the party leader might have been only a facade put up for the occasion, which could not endure long; that the internal fissures would, and must, soon assert themselves and break the party and rend the Government into warring factions.

He is indeed a rash man who is prepared to assert that that would never happen. Yet, we Indians know our people

and our institutions. All through the 79 years of its life there never was a time when the Indian National Congress was not riven by rival factions, a struggle for power and ideological conflicts. It has survived and even thrived on them, and we are convinced that it will continue to do so, lurching between dynamic activity and demoralising disunity.

Another gloomy prophecy that was doomed to prove false was that following Nehru's death the country would go to pieces. For the foreign observers do not reckon with our highly-developed instinct for self-preservation, born of a strange obsession which reacts violently to any threat to our political unity and security. Our unhappy history, replete with frequent foreign invasions and conquests, helped by internal disunity and dissensions, has conditioned us so.

Thus this reflex asserted itself in October 1962 amongst our people when faced with the Chinese threat to our national security. The crisis created by Nehru's death once again found the nation rising to the occasion and closing their ranks.

Paradoxically enough, those of us who, by our fulminations against our Government, gave the foreign observers their lop-sided ideas about our country, were also the first to look askance at the conclusions reached by them. No one knows better than we that things are far from ideal in our public life, that the pace of our economic progress is disappointingly slow, that our 'fissiparous tendencies' are a perpetual threat to our national unity and territorial integrity.

But we are also convinced—indeed, we can feel it in our very bones—that notwithstanding all those drawbacks and problems, our democracy will live because the people want it to live. And so will our political unity and territorial integrity endure, because we passionately and desperately desire it, and are prepared to sacrifice for it even our favourite national pastime of internecine squabbling!

It is refreshing to contrast the Western press's fears and forebodings at Nehru's death with the prescience displayed in its comments by the Asian press, from Cairo and Teheran to Colombo, Rangoon and Manila. Though apparently less efficiently informed about this country, the press of many an Asian capital never for once panicked over India's future

after Nehru, but on the contrary, confidently looked forward to India settling down to a constitutionally and democratically elected successor to take over and carry on where Nehru left.

For example, the *Bamshad* of Teheran in a special article on India declared: "Those who feel sorry for the future of India, do not take into account its powerful parties, free press and independent judiciary. One with such social characteristics, should be immune from the threat of disruption and dictatorship. In a society in which all things do not go to the benefit of a limited number of people and in which the government has to be run with the satisfaction of the people, crises more serious than a foreign invasion, disunity, religious differences and death of national leaders, will all pass over."

The *Samiksha* of Kathmandu stated: "The observers of the world had found ample proof of the fact that there is great political maturity in India as the Indian democracy has accepted the challenge posed by the end of the Nehru era."

The *Saturday Chronicle* of Manila noted: "Over the years, under his (Nehru's) leadership, India saw a steady growth of democratic institutions. For 17 years he maintained a democratic climate in this country, of which three free and fair elections have been a remarkable witness. ... And most importantly, he has given a certain orientation to the thinking of the country and it would not be easy to reverse its trend."

For the truth is, as John Grigg remarked in his obit on Nehru in the *Guardian*, "Although no man of his character, and in his position, could fail to be driven almost mad with impatience, he (Nehru) steadfastly refused to try for quicker results at the expense of free institutions."

# A VAIN QUEST

*Q*: People say that the greatest part of Gandhiji's legacy to India was you. Now, who is your legacy to India?

*A*: Four hundred million people who are capable of selecting a leader for themselves. I am not going to do it for them. It would be insolent of me to do it.

*Q*: But suppose they don't have that capacity?

*A*: They do. Anyway, it is rather depressing to me to believe that everything we have tried to do about preparing people to rule themselves has failed. I don't believe we have failed, at least not in that respect.

*Q*: They say—even some of your friends say—that if you fail to designate a successor, the attempt to choose one would tear the country to pieces. They say that all your good work could be undone if you don't train a man to take your place.

*A*: I think we will do all right. I think the country will do quite all right.

This dialogue took place between Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review* of New York and Nehru, as reported in that periodical in an article by the editor following Nehru's death.

Cousins added, "At that time, it is possible that he was the only man in India who held that view. Today, the Indian people know how right he was. They have been able to select a successor, a good man and a wise man. They have been able to do so without upheaval or disintegration."

Nevertheless, it seems to me that right through the seventeen years since independence Nehru had been incessantly

searching for one whom he could groom as his successor and political heir; for one who was ideologically and intellectually qualified to step into his shoes, who spoke his language and could intelligently and faithfully carry out his ideas and policies, after him. But it proved a vain quest. There is enough evidence to support this thesis.

To Nehru's way of thinking, however, he could legitimately nominate his political heir, if he could find one fit, according to his lights. Such a one he could not find, however diligent the search.

But if it was the leader of the Congress parliamentary party that they expected Nehru to nominate, he thought in a democratic set-up he was not competent to do it. That leader had to be elected by the party itself, uninhibited by any views explicitly expressed by him.

To Vincent Sheean, who put to him the eternal question, Nehru exclaimed: "Do democratic leaders choose their own crown princes? Are we like Roman emperors? I believe in democracy. I know that the ordinary processes of democratic politics will pick my successor." Here, obviously Nehru had in mind his successor as leader of the Congress parliamentary party and thereby the Prime Minister of the country.

When Gandhi named Nehru as his political heir, he was choosing his successor as The Leader of the country and not nominating the head of the Congress parliamentary party.

So Nehru declined to name his successor in the parliamentary party.

Around him, Nehru had found fine men, good in their own way, some of them of great strength of character, but intellectually mediocre, lacking in the grand vision, mostly innocent of the socialist pattern of society that Nehru dreamed of, unmoved by the romance of long-term economic planning, about which he so glowingly spoke, and indifferent to the enlightened internationalism he preached.

Many of them could hardly conceal their boredom when he passionately held forth on non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. Most of them were vague when they prated about democracy and liberty, while being personally intolerant and narrow-minded.

As one of the Cabinet Ministers described the scene to me,

the proceedings of a cabinet meeting in those days reminded one of an over-awed class of callow students listening to a revered professor lecturing, where debate was a monologous one-way traffic, where every one listened and solemnly agreed with the professor, having few questions to ask.

And so, as early as 1948, to the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's great annoyance, Nehru was found wooing Jaya Prakash Narayan to come back into the Congress fold, prepared to name him his political heir. For, hardly a few months earlier, at the Sardar's instance, the Congress had resolved against permitting parties within the party and driven out the Socialists.

But the more Nehru coaxed him, the more stubborn became Jaya Prakash's resistance. And therefore, most reluctantly, Nehru suspended his overtures to the socialist leader. In a broadcast in February 1948, Nehru declared: "I have never had any doubt about the ability and integrity of Jaya Prakash Narayan whom I value as a friend and I am sure that a time will come when he will play a very important part in shaping India's destiny."

Nehru never gave up hopes of persuading the 'Prodigal Son' to return to the Congress. In 1952, following the first general elections after independence, Nehru made fresh overtures to Jaya Prakash, this time trying to persuade the entire socialist party to re-merge into the Congress.

But once again the talks failed, after meandering for nearly six months, because the socialists, hugging strange illusions of their influence and strength in the country, completely unrelated to realities, pitched their terms too high to be acceptable to the Congress Party. In that general election, the PSP had polled 1.7 crores of votes as against the Congress vote of 4.5 crores. That was comparatively an impressive performance, but not good enough to warrant the PSP dictating terms to the victor.

In a statement in March 1953, Nehru pleaded: "Whatever other differences there might be, there is considerable field of common approach and methods between the Congress and the PSP. It is natural for them to co-operate in any field of activity, whenever opportunity offers itself. I have often thought therefore that we should enlarge these fields of

co-operative activity, more particularly when reactionary and communal forces divert people's attention into wrong channels and when the country demands constructive work of all kinds to build up the new India."

The PSP executive's response to this earnest and well-intentioned appeal was to ride a high horse and demand a complete surrender from the Congress as a condition of co-operation between the two parties. The executive insisted that "without a common basis of work, the experiment in co-operation, particularly at governmental levels, was bound to result in mutual conflicts, ineffectiveness and failure."

The PSP executive presented to the Congress an 18-point programme, which it called a 'minimum programme for the next few years.' The demands included the nationalisation of banks and key industries and other extreme measures involving amendment of the Constitution, that would have led to a major split and disruption of the Congress.

Nehru would never countenance that, as he always insisted on retaining the ideologically composite character of the Congress and keeping it a 'movement' rather than allowing it to reduce itself to a mere 'party.'

Explaining the reason for the breakdown of the talks, Nehru said: "It was not going to be useful to tie up each other down to any specific commitment. The question of co-operation between the two parties was thus dropped."

One of Nehru's lasting regrets was the irony of the Indian political situation which found his socialist comrades of kindred spirit in opposition to him, while he led and dragged an essentially rightist, and an almost unwilling, Congress along the socialist path.

Indeed, this peculiar predicament in which he found himself was largely responsible for his extreme reluctance to name his political heir. He saw none immediately around him to whom he could pass on his mantle and confidently hope that his ideas and policies would be faithfully carried out after him.

Since then much water has flowed under the Jumna bridge, and Jaya Prakash has drifted away from the mundane party politics to the semi-spiritual realm of Sarvodaya, only making periodical sallies into the country's politics. Indeed,

Nehru accused J.P. of "playing hide-and-seek between the pillars of politics and Bhoodan." Too late in the day, when the PSP had, at the end of three general elections, been reduced to a mere shadow, J.P. began publicly to advocate a merger of the PSP with the Congress.

After Nehru's death, Jaya Prakash at a public meeting in Madras, confessed that that refusal in 1948 was a 'major mistake' on his part, that the socialists should have then rejoined the Congress and strengthened Nehru's hands in his efforts to build up democratic socialism in the country.

J.P. further admitted that he proved wrong when he assumed that after independence Congress would depart from socialism to turn conservative-liberal, dominated by Sardar Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad and Chakravarti Rajagopalachariar. In the event, he noted, the Sardar died, Rajenbabu was kicked upstairs to the Presidency of the Republic, and Rajaji quit the Congress ultimately to found the Swatantra Party. That left Nehru in undisputed command of the Congress.

Foiled in the attempt to get Jaya Prakash by his side, Nehru rested back for a while before resuming his quest. As, however, the "Old Guard" died one after the other, leaving him lone and aging, Nehru's quest for a political heir once again became intensive. This time his eyes seemed to have rested on Krishna Menon. Nehru went all out to build him up.

It looks as though there were moments when Nehru seriously toyed with the idea of this dialectic socialist carrying forward his torch. But Menon's contentious ways and bramble-bush personality taxed Nehru's patience and brought India much unpopularity in the international arena. That ultimately seems to have somewhat cooled off Nehru's ardour for Menon, though right through, he stood by Menon through thick and thin.

Krishna Menon was an old friend of his, whose patriotic sacrifices, fiery idealism, razor-edge intellect and socialistic zeal always attracted him. Nehru appointed Menon as India's first High Commissioner in London. In no time however Menon managed to become the allergy of the British press as also of many in high places in Whitehall, so much so that

Nehru was compelled, however reluctantly, not to renew his tenure in London when it expired in 1952.

But the Prime Minister's faith in Menon was far from shaken, and he decided to make use of Menon's rare gifts on the home front. He introduced Menon to New Delhi via the United Nations. At the U.N. where he led the Indian delegation from 1952 to 1962, Menon made a great hit by his eloquence, forensic skill as well as a waspish tongue. He also distinguished himself as a committee man, ever ready with the right word and phrase that resolved a stalemate and pointed the way out of a deadlock.

Nehru was thrilled and delighted at his *chela's* spectacular success in that great international forum, and made up his mind to bring him into his Cabinet. Nehru worked like a beaver to wear down his Cabinet colleagues' opposition until he finally succeeded in getting Menon in. He was first, in 1956, made a Minister without Portfolio.

In 1957 Menon was appointed Defence Minister, and there too, in no time, he made his presence felt. Under his aegis, for the first time, the Defence Ministry came to the forefront, which till then was a low priority back number in the Government's order paper. Menon reached the peak of his career with his spectacular victory in the 1962 general elections from a Bombay constituency, defeating the veteran ex-Congressman and ex-Praja Socialist leader, Acharya J. B. Kripalani.

About this time, Menon was found working overtime and all-round to consolidate his and the leftists' position within the party and the country. His attacks against the right in the Congress became more violent and frontal, while he strove hard to bolster up the left wing within the party. There were also indications that he was mobilising strength behind him in his key post as Defence Minister, as he manipulated army promotions to get his men in strategic positions and shunted away others not prepared to eat out of his hand.

Right through the period of a decade, Menon continued to be Nehru's 'blue-eyed boy', who served as his ambassador-at-large abroad, attended U.N. meetings in New York, disarmament conferences at Geneva and Afro-Asian meets everywhere. Menon was Nehru's chief adviser on interna-

tional affairs and took a large hand in shaping India's foreign policy which increasingly came to be described by the West as "neutral on the other side". Many at home and abroad seriously began to talk of Menon as Nehru's successor, and for a while Menon himself seemed to believe them.

Among all his cabinet colleagues, intellectually Menon was the nearest to Nehru; ideologically he saw eye to eye with him and spoke the same language. At Cabinet meetings Menon made valuable contribution to debate on such complex economic and international problems as planning, the nuclear threat to world civilisation and Afro-Asian problems, where others kept mum.

In the international forum, such as the United Nations, Menon was brilliant in projecting Nehru's views and ideas on non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, disarmament, anti-colonialism and Kashmir. In doing so however, Menon gave one or two more twists, mostly anti-western, that made him easily the most hated U.N. personality in the United States. His brusque ways and lofty manner of handling the sensitive African and Asian delegates at the U.N. and elsewhere, estranged him and his country from many an African and Asian nation.

Within the Indian Parliament and the country, Menon was a frequent target of Opposition attacks and even Congress members' barbs. But Nehru staunchly stood by him and spiritedly defended his statements and actions in the U.N. and at home, so much so that at times Nehru's defence of Menon appeared perverse. But such was Nehru's faith in his protégé that Menon appeared to bear a charmed life, immune to every deadly missile aimed at him from any quarter.

And then Mao Tse-tung delivered the *coup de grâce*. Peking's perfidious attack on our Himalayan border, in October 1962, found our defences woefully unprepared, even while Menon insisted that China would never launch a major military attack on India, not on the eastern front in NEFA, at any rate!

With this cataclysmic event, the popular anger against the Defence Minister's Himalayan miscalculation rose to a mighty tidal wave, which even Nehru could not halt, and

swept away Menon out of the Indian Cabinet and into obloquy.

During that nightmare of Peking's perfidy, Nehru aged at least ten years. Indeed that could really be called the first stroke, in a figurative sense, that broke Nehru down. He appeared to be stunned by the shock that his friend Mao Tse-tung should have done that to him. The much-bruited Panch Sheel, to which they had jointly and solemnly attested their signatures, had been betrayed by Mao. For a moment, it appeared to Nehru that non-alignment, the very coping-stone of his international philosophy, had crashed around him.

With his health slipping, it now became all the more urgent that Nehru should find a fitting successor, and find him quickly. And so in his desperate quest, Nehru's searching gaze, for just a wee moment, would appear to have rested on Biju Patnaik, the intrepid leftist industrialist from Orissa, as a coming man worth watching.

As politicians go in this country, Patnaik at 48, was still young. He was backed by a legendary reputation. He was a daring aviator in the Indian Air Force in World War Two and a patriot who went to jail while still in the Air Force for helping the 'underground' during the 'Quit India' Movement. Towards the end of the war Patnaik hit the headlines by flying the Indonesian socialist leader Sutan Shahriar from Jakarta to Delhi.

Biju now dazzled the Indian public by his phenomenal success as an industrialist. Under his breath-taking initiative and prodding, his backward state of Orissa recorded rapid economic progress, while in no time, he dominated the political stage in his state. Endowed with a modern mind and an amiable, extrovert personality, Biju earned a reputation for 'getting things done'. Today his industrial domain is said to have a capital investment of Rs. 12 crores, employing 12,000 workers, and embraces a wide range of industries, from a textile mill, a tube plant, a low-shaft furnace, to a refrigeration plant and an airlines company.

When in the mid-term elections in the state he steered the Congress Party to a comfortable victory against a powerful opposition, capturing 82 out of the 140 seats in the Vidhan

Sabha, he had the State Congress in his pocket. He became the Chief Minister of the State, which post he held until he was 'Kamarajed' in August 1963.

During the three crisis weeks following the Chinese aggression, Patnaik shot up on to the national stage like a meteor, and then plummeted down equally fast. For, no sooner Nehru thought of him than he seems to have dropped him like a hot potato.

It was during that brief honeymoon that Patnaik turned defence adviser to the Prime Minister, occupied a special room in the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi, while simultaneously remaining the Chief Minister of Orissa, and even made a trip to the United States to negotiate for arms for his country.

Either Patnaik's own garrulous indiscretions or the allergy he roused in many quarters within the party and outside seem to have blasted Nehru's short-lived fascination for him.

Next Nehru's gaze seems to have wandered nearer home and vaguely settled on his daughter, Indira, to succeed him, not immediately, but possibly after the next general elections, in 1967. This theory has been propagated with much conviction in certain Congress circles, those close and friendly-disposed towards Nehru as well as by his critics.

Indira possessed most of the qualifications that Nehru looked for in his 'political heir'—a broad liberal education, an ideological affinity, a growing intellectual stature, political experience, a fair acquaintance with international affairs and a grip on the Congress organisation, of which she was a successful President in 1959.

It was as Congress President that she went over the head of her hesitant father to President Rajendra Prasad and persuaded him to introduce President's rule in Kerala and thus ousted the Communist government in that state. Latterly she carried out vital diplomatic missions in Washington as well as in East Africa. She has a clear and modern mind, and is capable of decisive action. Quite often, when her father hesitated to take a drastic step, as in the Kairon affair, she helped to make up his mind and get him to act.

Given another three years, by the time the 1967 general elections came around, Indira would fully qualify to step

into her father's shoes, and that would be the appropriate time for the old man to retire. Such were, according to these inside observers, Nehru's latest plans for the future.

But fate flung a spanner into these plans. The stroke Nehru suffered at Bhubaneshwar in January 1964 brought to him the painful realisation that he might not survive another three years, and at the same time he honestly felt that Indira should not, could not, yet step into his shoes.

With the sands of time fast running out, he picked out Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had been 'Kamarajed' only five months earlier, along with Morarji Desai, S. K. Patil and Jagjivan Ram, and made him a minister without portfolio and passed on to him all his major duties and functions as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. But then why did he not designate Lal Bahadur as Deputy Prime Minister?

When questioned on the point on March 30, Nehru told Parliament, "Frankly the question had not arisen before me." According to one source, Nehru had proposed to designate Lal Bahadur as Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha, but the proposal was opposed by certain senior ministers on the ground that thereby he would supersede them in rank.

This school of thought, however, while averring that Nehru's latest choice for his 'political heir' had been Indira, conceded that Lal Bahadur Shastri had, for nearly a decade, been Nehru's closest and most trusted confidant.

Nehru had repeatedly demonstrated, in the last five years in particular, his marked preference for Lal Bahadur over all his other Cabinet colleagues. But so long as the Indira proposition remained alive in Nehru's mind, Lal Bahadur, though greatly favoured, was no more than a stepney.

But why did Nehru pass over Morarji's legitimate claim to succeed him? After Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant's death, Morarji Desai came to be acknowledged on all hands as No. 2 in the Cabinet and in the Congress as a whole. But the day Nehru denied Morarji the deputy leadership of the party in place of Pant, the shape of things to come was clear to any observer.

Further, Nehru downgraded that post by amending the rules to get two deputy leaders appointed, one for each house of Parliament, giving it out that the deputy leader did not

automatically succeed to the leadership of the party. Thus Nehru had demonstrated, for any one to see, that he did not wish Morarji to succeed him as leader of the party and Prime Minister of the country.

In any political party in the world, democratic or totalitarian, it is the prerogative of the retiring leader to take a decisive hand, whether covertly or overtly, in the selection of his successor. Apart from inevitable personal prejudices, the vital considerations in front of a retiring leader are: (*a*) to ensure a successor who would be best able to keep the party together as a harmonious team, and (*b*) to see that the party's traditional policies and ideology are safe in the hands of the new incumbent.

An interesting and striking parallel is the considerable trouble that Clement Attlee took in 1955, to deny his deputy leader, Herbert Morrison, the leadership of the party after him. Attlee inordinately delayed his resignation until he had found a substitute candidate according to his specifications. That one was Hugh Gaitskell.

In this studied denial to Morrison what would appear to be his due, Attlee's personal prejudice against his deputy might have played a considerable part. But it was also apparent that it was Attlee's honest conviction that Morrison was not the right kind of leader for the Labour party at that juncture, that Labour's destinies were not secure in his hands, that he could not carry a team with him, that he was too very Right and rigid of mind.

Similarly Churchill saw to it that his 'blue-eyed boy', Anthony Eden, succeeded him when he finally retired. Macmillan from his hospital bed manipulated his favourite, Lord Home (now Sir Alec Douglas-Home), into the leadership of the Tory party and Prime Ministership of England and denied that honour to Rab Butler, his second in command.

And so it was with Lal Bahadur, as against Morarji Desai's claim to succeed Nehru. Nehru would appear to have convinced himself that democratic socialism, as also his other domestic and international policies, were not safe in Morarji's hands. Nehru considered Morarji's mind too narrow, rigid, closed and intolerant, apart from his much-talked of rightist ideology. Nehru also thought Morarji did not possess the

cohesiveness and tact needed to carry the entire party with him in the stormy days ahead.

The Political Correspondent of the *Statesman* has in a dispatch stated that Morarji actually lost the battle of succession on April 26, 1963. On that date, during the debate on the Compulsory Deposits Scheme in the Lok Sabha, according to this correspondent, Morarji betrayed his autocratic, rigid and undemocratic mind when he declared that he would not send for the Attorney-General (as demanded by many in the House) even if that were the unanimous wish of the House. That day Morarji planted doubts in the minds of many in the Congress Party about his democratic temperament.

But in my view Nehru took the decision to deny the leadership after him to Morarji even much earlier—in fact as far back as 1961, when following Pant's death, he blocked Morarji's formal promotion and designation as No. 2 in the Cabinet. The incident on April 26, 1963, like certain others, might have only further fortified Nehru's mental resolve on the matter.

Morarji's stern and cold exterior and an apparent lack of warmth are obviously a liability in the market-place of democracy. His assumption that the mantle of leadership after Nehru was his by automatic right had long been questioned. Yet he refused to go out to cultivate a following and expected others to come up and pay obeisance and vote to him. But there is much to his complaint that the press did not give him a fair deal.

Thus Nehru was too glad to avail of the Kamaraj Plan —which some unkind critics aver was specially fabricated for the purpose—to push out the two most prominent rightists in the Cabinet, Morarji Desai and S. K. Patil.

Then again, after Bhubaneshwar, when Nehru suffered a stroke, it was not Morarji, the man next to him in rank when he left the Government, but Lal Bahadur that the Prime Minister recalled to the Cabinet to stop-gap for him. "What work do you want me to do?" asked Lal Bahadur, when he went before the Prime Minister. "Do my work," replied Nehru.

Nehru returned to New Delhi from his brief Dehra Dun

holiday on May 26 and as he drove home from the airport, with Lal Bahadur by his side, Nehru suddenly turned to him and asked him to get ready to go with him to London for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference.

No, there was no doubt about it. Nehru had finally decided upon Lal Bahadur and wanted him to succeed Nehru as leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and Prime Minister of India.

When, therefore, Congress President Kamaraj laboured hard to get Lal Bahadur, as against Morarji, elected as party leader, he was doing no more than faithfully carrying out Nehru's implicit and, none the less, clear mandate.

# A NATION ORPHANED

WEDNESDAY, May 27, 1964, was a typical day in May in Delhi. Brassy skies. Oppressively hot and sultry. Not a leaf stirred. There was a stillness of death in the air. The entire city lay palpitating in a state of torpor.

Members of Parliament had been summoned to the Capital ostensibly to attend a special session convened to pass the nineteenth amendment to the Constitution, which had miscarried in the previous session. Little did they realise that fate had brought them to Delhi for another special purpose.

When the Lok Sabha assembled at 11 a.m. that day, the Members were taken aback as they heard Gulzarilal Nanda, Minister for Home Affairs, announce in sombre tones : "The Prime Minister has suddenly taken seriously ill. His condition is causing anxiety."

A similar announcement was made in the Rajya Sabha by T. T. Krishnamachari, the Minister for Finance. The news flashed around the country like an electric current. By midday the nation was convulsed by the tidings.

At Teen Murti, in New Delhi, the grim drama had started in the small hours of the morning.

The previous evening, Jawaharlal Nehru had returned, fit and cheerful, from a holiday in Dehra Dun. Five days earlier, Nehru had insisted at a press conference: "My lifetime is not ending soon." That month he had made three trips outside Delhi. At least two of them were physically arduous.

On May 4 he flew for a day to Bhaisalotan on the Indo-Nepalese border, to be present at the opening of the Gandak barrage. The following week he went to Bombay to attend the A.I.C.C. meeting. His next trip was to Dehra Dun for a rest. And he was due to leave in the next few days for

Kalimpong for a longer holiday.

On the night of May 26, he had worked at his files, as usual, till 11 o'clock. He had satisfied himself that there were no files pending, before repairing to bed, without the least suggestion of indisposition.

The next morning, Nehru woke up at 4 o'clock with a feeling of nausea. As was his wont, he refused to take it seriously and went back to bed, though unable to sleep due to acute discomfort and a pain in the back.

By 6 o'clock, the pain in the back became worse, and the Prime Minister called for his personal valet, Nathu, and Indira too woke up. The doctors were on the scene within minutes. When the doctors arrived, Nehru was still conscious, though he looked pale and his voice was feeble. He answered their queries. His blood pressure had dropped from 200 to 140. The doctors concentrated their effort on boosting up his blood pressure.

For two minutes, two fateful minutes, the doctors retired to an adjoining room for consultations. Nehru walked to the bathroom all by himself, and apparently with a supreme effort. It looks as though he misjudged his strength and the seriousness of his condition.

It would appear that the effort of walking to the bathroom unaided proved his undoing. Even as the doctors rushed to the bathroom to help him back to bed, he had collapsed, and thereafter he never regained consciousness until 8-40 a.m., when he opened his eyes, looked around searchingly until his eyes rested on Indira, but could not express himself. Soon after, he fell back unconscious never to recover.

By about 8 a.m. the team of doctors, who had kept a close watch on the precious patient, came to the conclusion that Nehru's condition had gone beyond repair. They expected the end within minutes. But this valiant fighter all his life, fought death for another six hours.

The end came at 1.55 p.m., as Indira, Gulzarilal Nanda, T. T. Krishnamachari and Lal Bahadur stood by, wringing their hands helplessly. President Radhakrishnan and Vice-President Zakir Husain rushed to Teen Murti House no sooner they got the tidings.

The nation was plunged into darkness. At 2.20 p.m. a

hushed Lok Sabha heard Mr. Subramaniam, Minister for Steel and Mines (the other senior Ministers were at Teen Murti) state: "I have very grave news to announce to the House and the country. The Prime Minister is no more. The light is out."

The news spread like wild fire right round the country. Gloom enveloped city, town and hamlet. And it looked as though the nation was instantly paralysed. All activity automatically ceased. Shops, offices and factories spontaneously shut down in Delhi and elsewhere. The streets of the capital appeared suddenly deserted. Even the ubiquitous taxis drove about silently and would not toot the horn.

Groups of people were seen huddled at street corners, talking in whispers, commiserating with each other—in 17 years and more Nehru had become part of their national and personal life. They could not bear the thought of having to do without him—him, who had led, cajoled, chided, pushed them along the path of progress and development.

Never has a nation wept so spontaneously and ardently at the death of a leader as Indians did at Nehru's death that day. Never in the history of the world has there been a leader who ruled his people entirely by love and was held in such deep esteem by them.

The actual cause of Nehru's death was never officially spelt out by the team of doctors attending on him. It was at first described as 'heart attack and shock'. Later they called it a 'haemorrhage of the aorta, the artery leading from the heart'. Yet later, it was suggested that Nehru died of a leakage in the aorta and of the exertion of walking to the bathroom three hours after the heart attack.

But the nation could not remain paralysed at this supreme moment of crisis in its history, when cool, circumspect action was all the more called for. There could be no pause in the governance of the country.

At 10-30 a.m. when the doctors had pronounced Nehru's condition as critical and the hope of his survival as slender, the emergency sub-committee of the Cabinet was convened at the Prime Minister's house. It was attended by Nanda, Krishnamachari and Lal Bahadur. The meeting decided upon nominating Nanda, the seniormost member of the Cabinet,

as Prime Minister of a care-taker Government, until the Congress Parliamentary Party met and elected a new leader.

The Law Ministry advised that constitutionally it was necessary that a new Prime Minister should be sworn in, since there was no Deputy Prime Minister, and there could be no Government without a Prime Minister. (This view is, however, contested by certain other constitutional experts who opine that under our Constitution, it is the President who rules, with the assistance of his Council of Ministers, and not the Cabinet as such.)

It was thus that at 4.30 p.m., some two and a half hours after Nehru's death, Nanda was sworn in as Prime Minister by President Radhakrishnan. A point worth making here is that at this moment of national crisis, President Radhakrishnan played a strictly constitutional role—ever helpful, always available for advice and guidance, but never once trying to influence the subsequent events whether in the ruling party electing a new leader or forming a new Government.

In the meantime, in Madras, some 1,500 miles away, Kumaraswami Kamaraj, Congress President, was handed the grave news of Nehru's critical illness at about 10 a.m. as he was out touring the Congress organisation in the State. He rushed back home, and then to the airport, just in time to catch the plane for Delhi.

As he winged his way northward, the first thought that weighed on Kamaraj was: if the worst came to pass, how to ensure an orderly succession, without disturbing the party solidarity? His second concern was to see to it that Nehru's successor was such as would have been approved by Nehru himself and one who would faithfully and loyally carry out Nehru's policies and ideology. His third anxiety was to produce an incumbent who was acceptable to all sections and factions in the Congress Party.

The news of Nehru's death overtook Kamaraj while still in flight. He landed at Palam nearly two hours after the event, and straight drove to Teen Murti. When he was told that Gulzarilal Nanda had already been sworn in as Prime Minister, he appeared perturbed. He was relieved when G. Rajagopalan, General Secretary of the Congress and his spokesman and interpreter, explained to him that that was

only a temporary arrangement required by the Constitution and that Nehru's successor had yet to be chosen in due course by the party.

The next day was entirely taken up by arrangements for a greatest-ever funeral his people wanted to give their beloved departed leader. They vied with one another to demonstrate their affection and esteem for him. This was their last opportunity, and there was nothing that they would not do for him.

On the Jamuna bank, some 300 yards away from Mahatma Gandhi's samadhi, was the spot selected for the cremation. Workmen toiled all night to construct a redbrick platform for the funeral pyre, and they put a railing around it.

Earlier in the day, one million people had filed past the body lying in state in the porch at Teen Murti. Ten thousand service personnel now lined the six-mile route of the funeral procession, which was hemmed by a sorrowing crowd of two million people, which in Central Vista was 20 to 100 deep. Yet another million watched the cremation itself.

The funeral procession started from Teen Murti at 1-10 p.m. Draped in the Tricolour and snowed under by flowers and wreaths, the body lay on a gun-carriage pulled by 60 servicemen—twenty representing each of the three arms. The pallbearers, comprised the three Service Chiefs, two Lieutenant-Generals, two Admirals and two Air Vice-Marshals.

Eminent statesmen, representing many countries of the world, had specially flown to Delhi to attend the funeral and pay their last respects to the great internationalist.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Prime Minister of Britain; Lord Mountbatten, Nehru's family-friend, representing the British Queen; Dean Rusk, U.S. Secretary of State; Alexis Kosygin, First Deputy Premier of the Soviet Union, and Louis Jot, French Minister of State, were there. So were Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon; Hussain Shafai, Vice-President of the U.A.R.; Peter Stambolic, the Yugoslav Premier; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Foreign Minister of Pakistan; Tulsi Giri, Chairman of the Nepalese Council of Ministers; the Iranian Minister of Interior; George Brown, Deputy Leader of the British Labour Party and the Maharaja of Sikkim.

As the mammoth funeral procession started out, the

weather was so oppressively hot—41 degrees Centigrade—that many fainted. The crowds were so large and unmanageable that the most elaborate police arrangements broke down. There were unprecedented traffic snarls. Many a foreign dignitary was held up, and among them was Lord Mountbatten who alighted from his car and started footing it out, until a Rashtrapati Bhavan A.D.C. spotted him and picked him up. There were stampedes in which at least three were killed and over a hundred injured.

It took three hours for the procession to reach the destination on the bank of the Jamuna. At 4.37 p.m., to the chanting of Vedic hymns by Brahmins, 16-year old Sanjay, Nehru's second grandson, led and helped by Indira, lit the pyre. And as tins of ghee poured into the fire and faggots of sandalwood fed it, the flames leapt up and consumed the mortal remains of Nehru. The crowd wept and cried *'Jawaharlal amar rahe'*, *'Nehru zindabad'*.

Thus ended an epoch in India's modern history. The long, glorious, eventful Nehru era came to a close. In his and their time, he had promised his people no more than toil and sweat. If his achievements for the country were not more spectacular than what they were, his fault possibly was that he asked of his people more than they were capable of; that, possibly, the human material he was working with failed him. He dreamed great dreams for his country. He was a man in a hurry, hustling his people to progress, desperately trying to conquer time by sheer pace.

The torch that Nehru lighted has now been handed to his most trusted lieutenant, Lal Bahadur Shastri. On Lal Bahadur's slender but strong shoulders lies the mighty responsibility of carrying forward the traditions laid down by his great preceptor.

The most apt epitaph on Nehru's samadhi would be his favourite lines from Robert Frost which he kept in front of him on his working desk:

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."

# OPERATION CONSENSUS

NEHRU is dead. Long live Nehru.

The country's government has to go on. And so, even as the nation mourns the loss of an indispensable leader, the elders plunge themselves into the task of choosing his successor and new Prime Minister for the country.

It was agreed on all hands that the election of leader should take place as soon as possible, if unseemly scenes of intrigue, manoeuvring and canvassing on behalf of rival candidates were to be avoided.

There was also a school of thought, however, particularly among the leftists, who contended that the best way of avoiding unseemly scenes was to postpone the election for some months and continue with the *status quo*. In other words, they were in favour of Gulzarilal Nanda carrying on as Prime Minister for some more time until the Congress Party affairs stabilised themselves.

In other words, the leftists preferred a leftist to succeed Nehru as Prime Minister of India. Following the exit of Krishna Menon and Keshav Dev Malaviya, leftism within the Congress was already in the doldrums. With Nehru's death, the leftists were afraid they might lose all influence in the party unless their group was powerfully represented in the Central Cabinet through the person of the Prime Minister himself.

They decided that leftist interests were not safe in Lal Bahadur's hands. And strangely enough, they were even prepared to make a deal with the Morarji-ites and preferred Morarji to Lal Bahadur as Prime Minister. They supported Santhanam's contention that the High Command should have no hand in the election of the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and that that task was the exclusive prerogative of the Parliamentary Party.

The leftists distrusted the High Command in the matter of election of the leader of the parliamentary wing. The Congress President's predilection in favour of Lal Bahadur was well known. It was believed that if the issue was left exclusively to the parliamentary party, without interference from the High Command, Morarji Desai would be its choice.

Morarji himself backed Santhanam's thesis and found himself at one with Krishna Menon in the concern felt that with an outside caucus seeking to direct the conduct and affairs of the parliamentary group, the parliamentary party might lose its autonomy.

Kamaraj however firmly rejected the Santhanam line and ruled that the High Command had a vital say in the election of the party leader. In support of his ruling, Nehru's statement at the Jaipur session of the AICC in November 1963 was cited, in which Nehru had insisted that the Central Parliamentary Board should be consulted on the choice of the party leader.

No sooner had Kamaraj got back from the funeral than he initiated his round of consultations with his colleagues. Immediately, he was in conclave with his counsellors, Atulya Ghosh, S. K. Patil and Sanjiva Reddy, who soon came to be dubbed a caucus or syndicate. He also met that night Mohanlal Sukhadia, Chief Minister of Rajasthan and H. Hanumanthayya and U. S. Mallaya from Karnatak.

By next day, the air was thick with rumours and reports about the candidates in the field. Emissaries and lobbyists of rival candidates were already out in the field canvassing for their respective clients. The Chief Ministers from the States were the most sought after, and much horse-trading was attempted, even though it did not get very far.

It was early given out that Morarji Desai intended to contest for the leadership of the party. Yet another personality who threw his hat into the ring was Jagjiwan Ram. The leftists hoped they would be able to persuade Nanda to accept their line that no election should be held for some months until the Congress affairs stabilised themselves, while the Nanda Government continued in office.

Meanwhile, Lal Bahadur scrupulously kept himself in the background, declining to say a word about his candidature.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged however that everyone within the party and outside were convinced that Lal Bahadur would be the next Prime Minister and were quietly happy about it. To them the issue was confined to whether Lal Bahadur would be elected unanimously or after a contest.

At the last moment, a red herring was drawn across the track. An effort was made to persuade both Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri to withdraw in favour of an unanimous election of Indira Gandhi as leader. Jagjiwan Ram, who was by then out of the race, is believed to have initiated this move.

Morarji refused to look at the proposal. It was reported that Lal Bahadur was at the outset inclined to acquiesce in it, but was then persuaded to stick to his original resolve. Ultimately, nothing came of the proposal. Indications are that it never got as far as Indira, or if it did, she must have turned it down, being too gravely preoccupied to be in a mood yet to give thought to such matters.

In the meantime, what with the world press anticipating an ugly war of succession and an unease evident within the country itself, the Congress President was doubly determined to prevent such an unhappy development. Kamaraj bent his energies to ensure an orderly, disciplined, unanimous election of Nehru's successor. To this end, he had already started sounding opinion among the leaders of various regional groups and individual leaders.

Kamaraj made no secret of his own preference for Lal Bahadur. Nor was he in doubt that in a contest Lal Bahadur would win comfortably, what with the South and East solidly behind him and a scattered vote from other regions assured for him. The votes of not only Tamilnad, Andhra, Karnatak and Kerala, but also of West Bengal and Assam were securely with Lal Bahadur.

On Morarji's side were, besides Gujarat, the leftist Biju Patnaik's Orissa, Pratap Singh Kairon's Punjab as also D. P. Mishra's Madhya Pradesh, while Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan were divided or had yet to make up their minds.

Balwantray Mehta, leading the Gujarat group, is actually

reported to have pleaded to the Congress President that both Lal Bahadur and Morarji should remain at the head of the Cabinet on the analogy of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel co-existing in the Central Government in the first years after independence.

Balwantray was, however, it is reported, vague as to which of the two should be the Prime Minister. Indeed, Balwantray, a member of the Servants of the People Society, of which Lal Bahadur was the current President, found himself torn between two loyalties. Strangely enough, Biju Patnaik, the leftist, was the only leader who stood unswervingly loyal to Morarji to the end.

Among those who opposed Lal Bahadur were Krishna Menon and Keshav Dev Malaviya who, it would appear never forgave him for the prominent part he played in their ouster from the Cabinet. The day after the Nehru funeral, the leftists met at Malaviya's residence to decide their course of action on the issue of election of leader. The meeting is reported to have decided upon opposing Lal Bahadur's election, but many of those present rebelled against the directive, according to one source.

Similarly, Jagjiwan Ram convened a meeting of Harijan Congressmen at his place in order to mobilise the Harijan vote against Shastri and in favour of Morarji. Many of the Harijan leaders present are reported to have demurred at the directive and pleaded that if Jagjiwan Ram himself stood for election they would all loyally vote for him, but they should be allowed the freedom to vote as they liked as between Lal Bahadur and Morarji.

But as the pro-Lal Bahadur trend became more pronounced, there were desertions from the Morarji camp, prominent among whom, according to the Morarji-ites, were Yeshwantrao Chavan and D. P. Mishra.

According to the other version, however, Vasantrao Naik, Maharashtra's Chief Minister, and Vinayakrao Patil, the MPCC President, had already conveyed to Kamaraj Maharashtra's preference for Lal Bahadur as against Morarji, even before Chavan could return to Delhi from the United States.

When Chavan arrived in the Capital the next day, he

sensed the feeling in the Maharashtra camp and fell in with the view already expressed by the two Maharashtra leaders to the Congress President.

And as for Mishra of Madhya Pradesh, he is stated to have been overruled by the rank and file Congressmen in the State, who favoured Lal Bahadur.

By the time 'Operation Consensus' concluded, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar completely switched over to Lal Bahadur. Thus with the party gods firmly on the other side, Morarji came to realise, quite early in his brief career as candidate, that the dice was heavily loaded against him, but still he held out gamely.

Kamaraj was bent on averting a contest—if only to demonstrate to the world and the country that in a supreme crisis the Congress was capable of keeping its head, maintaining solidarity and displaying discipline and maturity.

But how was he to persuade the other candidates to stand down in favour of the hot favourite? It could be done only if the rivals were convinced they really stood no chance against Lal Bahadur. And thus the consensus idea was born —to ascertain from among the 500 odd top Congress leaders assembled in New Delhi the consensus of their choice for leader.

A consensus obviously is an informal device to get at the 'sense of the house' on a given issue, which the British Tory party applied effectively in selecting its leader. But the Tories did not formally record on paper the views of those interviewed, nor was it an exhaustive survey of opinion, as Kamaraj's consensus was alleged by its critics to have been.

The way the consensus was conducted by the Congress President, they insisted, it amounted to an open vote and therefore not necessarily a free, uninhibited and uninfluenced vote. The consensus, they say, like statistics, can be made to say what its operator desires it to say, that it is an apparatus into which you feed a bunch of names at one end and, hey presto, there comes out, at the other end, the name of the favourite one, duly docketed.

So far as the 1964 post-Nehru stakes were concerned, however, the final field had been narrowed down to two—Lal Bahadur and Morarji. Jagjiwan Ram had dropped out quite

early. Nanda was a non-starter and Indira was neve. on the card. Thus the 'Operation Consensus' came to be applied only to two.

The first meeting of the Working Committee after Nehru's death was held on May 29. But it confined itself to passing a resolution of condolence and recording with gratitude Nehru's invaluable and varied services to the country.

Two days later, on May 31, the Working Committee was specially convened to discuss the question of election of the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party. At this crucial meeting, 42 Congressmen were present, including 21 members of the Working Committee, 15 Chief Ministers of States and six special invitees.

This meeting refrained from discussing the names of candidates and confined itself to procedure. Following a moving appeal for unity and solidarity by the Congress President, the meeting resolved that the new leader should be elected unanimously, and to that end, authorised Kamaraj to ascertain the consensus among the leading Congressmen assembled in New Delhi on their preference for leadership.

Having obtained that mandate from the Working Committee, Kamaraj laboured all next day, from 8 o'clock in the morning till 8 in the night, interviewing about 200 Congressmen, in groups and individually, and noting their individual views. Among them were Working Committee members, State Chief Ministers, veteran leaders and M.P.s.

The consensus he gathered at the end of it all only confirmed his own, and the popular, view that Lal Bahadur was the universal favourite. Many of those interviewed said they would leave the issue to the Congress President to decide. Some of the Congressmen expressed one view when they met Kamaraj in group and presented an exactly opposite view when they met him individually.

At 9 p.m. Kamaraj conveyed the result of his all-day operation to members of the Working Committee. At 10 o'clock, Kamaraj telephoned Morarji, offering to come over to talk to him. But Morarji himself drove to the Congress President's residence and received from him the consensus verdict.

Morarji, who had anticipated the verdict, accepted the

Congress President's word for it and at once announced his withdrawal from the contest, and even offered to propose Lal Bahadur's name at the party meeting.

Thus the stage was set for the unanimous election of Nehru's successor, to belie the prophecy of the Western press and allay the apprehensions of some Indians that the Congress might go to pieces after Nehru.

For this *dénouement* the credit should almost entirely go to one man. It was Kamaraj's political wisdom, astute statesmanship and masterly handling of a difficult situation that ensured a smooth, orderly and dignified transition.

Kamaraj, who arrived in Delhi just two hours after Nehru's death, immediately took command of the situation, when most ministers of the Central Government were distraught and confused to think and act clear-headedly and dispassionately.

The Congress President's orderly mind was crystal clear on the tasks immediately before him and their priorities. He had come to the conclusion, some months earlier, that after Nehru, it had to be a 'collective leadership' for the Congress. He realised that the next Prime Minister could never be the towering personality that Nehru was, nor enjoy the absolute powers that he did, and therefore Nehru's successor would inevitably have to be 'the first among equals'.

Kamaraj was however convinced that the next Prime Minister had to be a man of an all-India stature, respected, popular and acceptable among all sections of the party and in all parts and regions of the country. He therefore now sought to carry with him from the outset the regional bosses and State Chief Ministers. He decided that hereafter the ties between the Centre and the States should be closer and firmer so as to ensure that the 'collective leadership' machinery was well-integrated and functioned smoothly, harmoniously and effectively.

Kamaraj even associated the Chief Ministers of States with the election of the Prime Minister of the country. From one point of view this should be considered in order in a vast, complex federal state, where the constituent units are culturally and economically distinctive entities, zealous of their autonomy, which had hitherto been kept on the leash by the

overpowering personality of Nehru. Thus Kamaraj got the powerful State Congress bosses firmly behind the new Prime Minister.

Even in Nehru's time many senior Chief Ministers had begun to buck at the Central *fatvas* and state bosses had striven to make their importance felt in the affairs of the Congress by virtue of their control over the Congress machinery in their respective regions. In the absence of Nehru, it would be all the more necessary to humour the regional bosses to play ball with the Centre. Such obviously was Kamaraj's reasoning.

On the other hand, it could also prove a bad precedent if it inhibited the Prime Minister's freedom of action in vital national and state matters. This could easily happen if the Chief Ministers got it into their heads that having paid the piper, they had the right to order the tune.

'Collective leadership', even in the Central Cabinet, let alone participation by outsiders in the making of decisions and policies, could hamstring the Prime Minister's initiative and thus render government ineffective.

Incidentally, Kamaraj has laid down for the future an orderly procedure for electing the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party. This procedure combines in itself both the British Tory party's system of consensus and the Labour Party's method of election for selecting the leader.

# THE LEADER, THE LEADER

When on June 2, six days after Nehru's death, 500 odd members of the Congress Parliamentary Party assembled in the domed Central Hall of Parliament House, a load appeared to have been lifted off their minds. Their beaming countenances, proclaimed it. They congratulated each other on the happy *dénouement*.

Their fears of having to face the bitterness of a keenly fought contest between two much revered leaders had been dissipated. They had now met to go through a mere formality, to elect by acclamation the single candidate in the field, and what is more, one most acceptable to them all.

Yet that fact did not rob the occasion of its solemnity. It was indeed a historic moment. This was the first major event in the post-Nehru era when Congressmen had to get along on their own, without the protecting shadow of the great leader towering over them. They had risen to the occasion, and had thus proved worthy of his faith in them.

As the 21 members of the High Command trooped in and took their seats at the main table, a hush fell over the assembly. Looking down from the wall behind was a giant portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. Twelve large pedestal fans, looking like twelve windmills, whirred to cool down the oppressively hot atmosphere. This was the hall in which at midnight on August 14, seventeen years earlier, India had declared herself independent, when Nehru made the historic 'tryst with destiny' speech, and the nation's representatives took their pledge of loyalty to the National Tricolour.

The Congress President presided over the meeting. It was most businesslike. Kamaraj, speaking in Tamil, set the tone, with an impassioned appeal to the members to elect their new leader unanimously and preserve the solidarity of the party and unity of the country.

"In the past the party and Government might have committed grave mistakes, but those were covered up by the towering personality of Nehru," he said, and warned, "Hereafter even if we commit small mistakes, they will be magnified and the people will not forgive us."

Gulzarilal Nanda then formally proposed Lal Bahadur's name for the leadership of the party. Morarji Desai seconded. Speaker after speaker came forward to felicitate the new leader and pledge their loyalty and co-operation to him.

Yet another common theme in these speeches was well-deserved tributes to the Congress President, whom Nanda described as the 'symbol of unity of the Congress,' for his signal achievement in the preceding crucial three days. They then congratulated the Congress party for meeting the crisis with poise and dignity and demonstrating to the world and the country its solidarity.

Lal Bahadur's was a characteristic reply. Shorn of all frills, his speech came straight from his heart. It did not strain at effect. It was no thundering policy statement. In typical humility, he said: "I tremble when I am reminded of the fact that I have to be in charge of this country and Parliament which had been led by no less a person than Jawaharlal Nehru." He then reiterated, "Socialism is our objective." He named poverty and unemployment as two 'biggest enemies' we should fight.

But he broke down when he referred to Indira Gandhi and the way she had borne 'this calamity' and averred that her "continued association with us will be a source of strength for all of us." He then expressed his 'most sincere thankfulness' to Morarji Desai who had so graciously agreed to abide by the wishes of the Congress President. Thanking Kamaraj for the heavy burden he had taken upon his shoulders, Lal Bahadur said, "I greatly appreciate the way in which you have handled this task."

The meeting concluded with a fervent appeal to the Parliamentary Party from the Congress President to extend to the new leader their unstinted co-operation. Kamaraj enjoined upon the Congressmen assembled: "Our duties and responsibilities do not end with the election of the leader. As a matter of fact, they begin with the selection of the leader.

It is only to the extent that we are able to extend to him our co-operation and helpful and sympathetic attitude that he will be able to discharge his responsibility. . . . Fortunately our great leader (Nehru) has left behind policies and programmes, which if faithfully followed, will secure us the confidence of the people in a very great measure. So let us march forward together in unity, and give the (new) leader unstinted co-operation."

At his first press conference, the Prime Minister-designate touched upon policy matters. He solemnly promised the country that his Government would "work for a new social order in which a few won't monopolise wealth." A down-to-earth man, he named rising prices as the most formidable problem before his Government. He then emphasized the need for toleration and to protect the interests of the minorities.

According to his priorities, the building up of the country's defensive strength, fighting poverty and unemployment and national integration were the three major problems before the country. As was to be expected of him, he devoted much of his time at the press conference to domestic issues.

In the sphere of external affairs, Lal Bahadur reiterated his great predecessor's policy which, he considered, "is beneficial and will be beneficial for the country in future." He added, India could not afford to associate with any power bloc, but would continue to maintain friendly relations with all countries belonging to any bloc."

Seven hours after his unanimous election as leader of the party, Lal Bahadur called on the President and was invited to form a government. Addressing the first meeting of the party after his election as its leader, three days later, Lal Bahadur enunciated his policy towards China and Pakistan, which was "one of persuasion without abandoning our basic principles."

He appeared more flexible and amicably disposed towards Pakistan, and said he was scheduled to meet President Ayub Khan in London during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference. But unfortunately this much-looked-for meeting between the two leaders could not materialise because Lal Bahadur had, at the last minute, to cancel his London trip

under medical advice.

Ultimately they met on October 12 at Karachi on Lal Bahadur's way back from the Non-aligned Summit at Cairo.

In regard to China, however, Lal Bahadur made it clear that the Colombo proposals could alone form the basis of talks with that country, and there was no question of going beyond them. "We have gone to the utmost limit in accepting them," he said.

Lal Bahadur's immediate next task was cabinet-making. In a sense this was made easy by the insistence that members of the Nehru Cabinet should be retained *in toto* in the new government. Such was in particular Indira's desire. Not to do so, it was believed, would be interpreted as a reflection on Nehru. To many however this theory seemed far-fetched. That insistence also hamstrung the new Prime Minister's freedom of selecting a team entirely of his choice and from scratch.

Lal Bahadur had, however, gone on record with the statement that merit alone need not be the criterion for choosing ministers and that in a vast country like India large Cabinets were inevitable and natural, whether in the Centre or in the States.

At his first press conference as Prime Minister-designate, questioned about the size and composition of his Cabinet, Lal Bahadur had stated, "Of course merit is very important: yet, we have to consider various other aspects also, and I think in a vast and big country like India, if you have a somewhat bigger Cabinet it could be fully justified. Generally speaking, I have not been in favour of imposing restrictions in so far as the formation of the Cabinet and its number is concerned both at the Centre and in the States."

But he firmly rejected the suggestion that his Cabinet should be composite and representative of the various interests and regions that contributed to his unanimous election. He worked to produce a homogeneous team within the limitations inherent in the situation. His task thus primarily became one of how to fit the new entrants into the team.

The greatest headache for Lal Bahadur lay in the distribution of portfolios. He wished to bring his 'Kamarajed' comrades back with him into the Cabinet. There was no

difficulty about S. K. Patil's return, as he was prepared to accept the Railway portfolio, which he had earlier, a year ago, refused to do, when Nehru decided to move him from Food and Agriculture.

But there was an almost insurmountable difficulty over accommodating Morarji Desai who insisted on No. 2 position as a condition for his joining the new Cabinet. There were however powerful forces, including Indira Gandhi, ranged against him.

It was claimed that Nanda, because he had been the Prime Minister for 13 days, should get precedence over Morarji and be given No. 2 rank. This was not a very convincing argument when applied to a man of the status of Morarji, but it prevailed, backed as it was by Kamaraj, Indira and T. T. Krishnamachari.

Among those who favoured Morarji coming in as No. 2 were S. K. Patil and Sanjiva Reddy, even though they had favoured Lal Bahadur against Morarji for the Prime Ministership.

When finally Lal Bahadur offered him the portfolio of Commerce and Industry, with No. 3 position in the Cabinet, Morarji summarily turned it down, considering it an insult to him. But he assured the new Prime Minister and his Government his co-operation 'in full measure'.

Morarji felt—and many will sympathise with him—that his position in the country's politics and the Congress organisation entitled him to at least No. 2, if not No. 1, position and certainly a rank above that of Nanda, who was far junior to him in the country's public life. It was only following the Kamaraj Plan that Nanda had suddenly found himself catapulted up to No. 2 rank, with Morarji, Lal Bahadur, S. K. Patil and Jagjiwan Ram all out at once. Morarji thought if he did not now get even No. 2 position in the Cabinet, he would be 'compromising his self-respect and dignity.'

With the exclusion of Morarji, it became easier to drop Jagjiwan Ram and to bolster up the claim that the Kamaraj Plan had not been jettisoned.

The Cabinet was seven days in the making, and yet it bore all the marks of being put together in a hurry and haphazardly. There was much mismatching to be found in

the allotment of portfolios. The Shastri Cabinet displayed expediency rather than courageous departures from routine thinking, which was possibly unavoidable in the circumstances. Thus adjustments and reshuffles in the Cabinet dribbled along for some days thereafter.

The inclusion of Indira Gandhi as Minister of Information and Broadcasting was, however, a welcome surprise. It was earlier believed that she was not yet prepared to take up a Cabinet post.

But Lal Bahadur's retention of the portfolio of External Affairs came in for much press criticism. It was however assumed that it was a temporary device. The assumption proved correct when a month later he announced Sardar Swaran Singh's appointment as Foreign Minister. This appointment was acclaimed all round.

Equally controversial was the switching of Steel and Heavy Industries from Subramaniam, who was doing an excellent job there, to a new-comer like Sanjiva Reddy, who was coming to the Central Government for the first time and had yet to try his hand at a job involving much economic background. Nor was Labour and Employment a large enough portfolio to be handled by a Cabinet minister plus a minister of state, particularly when Social Security was passed on to another minister.

It was well past midnight when Lal Bahadur dashed to Rashtrapati Bhavan with the completed list of his Cabinet. The President had been waiting for him all evening. The list of ministers of the new Government was released to the press at the unearthly hour of 3 a.m., when the morning newspapers in the capital and the country would normally have gone to press. But this morning they specially waited after the deadline for the big news. Many of the Ministers included in the new Cabinet read about it for the first time in the newspapers in the morning. It was not until forenoon on June 9 that the Shastri Cabinet was actually sworn in.

President Johnson faithfully and honestly carried forward the Kennedy policies both in the domestic and international spheres, but in the implementation of those policies, the people discerned a new style, a new accent and a new technique. It is inevitable and natural that the Nehru policies,

loyally adhered to by the successor Government, would still bear a new impress, that of the Shastri personality and style and be shaped by the environment surrounding the new Prime Minister.

Nor can one miss the fact that the Lal Bahadur Cabinet is essentially a government of the dead centre in its political complexion, and therefore should prove durable, as it represented the hard-core congressmen's ideology. Pragmatism rather than dogma would appear to be the guiding principle of the Lal Bahadur Government, where the Nehru Cabinet was very much left-of-centre, at least in precept if not in practice.

And the prospect is that the new Government might even go slightly right of centre. Kamaraj himself, like Lal Bahadur, may be described as a centrist, but his caucus, essentially right of centre, might seek to exercise influence over the new Prime Minister. If Nanda, Indira and Subramaniam are taken as left in the present Cabinet (though not of the same hue as Krishna Menon and Malaviya, not by a long chalk), the right might be considered as represented by S. K. Patil and Sanjiva Reddy within and Atulya Ghosh outside. In welcoming Lal Bahadur's appointment as Prime Minister, the country's trade and industry noted his 'moderate views' and looked forward to a 'practical and vigorous policy to accelerate the economic growth of the country'.

The world press, both Western and communist, was generally warmly sympathetic to Lal Bahadur, even though one could detect a greater warmth in the West where the hope would appear to be ill-concealed that the Shastri Government might go right. For the same reason, the Soviet press, while wishing well to the new Government, struck a note of caution and reservation about the likely rightist pressures that might come to be applied on it in course of time.

This demonstrable warmth was particularly noticed in the British attitude towards the Indian Prime Minister. Editorials were not only sympathetic but generous, while the B.B.C. ran many a special feature on Lal Bahadur and the new Government of this country.

# WHY LAL BAHADUR

When short stature and a strong will go together, there is the stuff heroes are made of. In our own history Shivaji, a diminutive figure, converted the Marathas, scattered over the arid Ghats, into a dynamic nation. Napoleon, another short personality, nearly conquered the world for himself 150 years ago.

Nelson, Frederick the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Mussolini, Dollfus of Austria, were also short and powerful personalities who turned into outstanding leaders of men and accomplished great feats of human endeavour.

It is their short-stature complex that drives them to excel their fellow-men and dominate them, as if making up for their lack of inches and brawn by extra-sharpened brains and superior mental powers.

It possibly stems from an inferiority complex imprinted on their sensitive minds early in their lives by the bullying and jeering of heftier and stronger mates. That would appear to drive them to work harder and revenge themselves on a world of the tall and the big, by proving their superiority over them and getting on top of them.

Lal Bahadur, at any rate, appeared conscious of his dimunitive figure all the time, which seems to have been the main spur for his unique success in politics. Speaking in the Lok Sabha on the Ariyalur disaster in 1956, following which he resigned his post as Railway Minister, Lal Bahadur protested: "Perhaps due to my being small in size and soft of tongue, people are apt to believe that I am not able to be very firm. Though not physically strong, I think I am internally not so weak."

Whereas in most others, however, a short stature imparts an insufferable cockiness, in Lal Bahadur it has induced humility and modesty. He is quick to apologise; receives

people individually, and unlike the late Govind Ballabh Pant who gave audience to visitors *en masse,* he always accompanies departing visitors to the door; and never allows people to touch his feet. At A.I.C.C. meetings, one rarely finds him on the dais; he prefers to take his place in the pit with the rank and file.

Endowed with a fine sense of humour, Lal Bahadur has the capacity to laugh at himself. He frequently likes to joke about his height. At a children's gathering he jocularly asserted: "I have been called to this function because of my size." Stemming from the same complex is perhaps his habit of making self-deprecatory remarks. He has often described himself as "mediocre" and "not important person." He finds his greatest relaxation in playing with children, and he is once reported to have mock-seriously complained: "I am so small that nobody likes to play with me. I, therefore, turn to children."

In 1963, he laid the foundation-stone of the Rashtriya Shala in Rajkot. His host by way of tribute to Lal Bahadur said that the Home Minister had no enemies in the world. In response, Lal Bahadur quipped: "How can a small man like me dare make enemies?"

Later, in Bombay, at a Congress party meeting someone asked him a question on the Ministry in Maharashtra State in the context of restricting the size of State Governments. Lal Bahadur pointed at the Maharashtra Home Minister P. K. Sawant beside him and said "these people" had powers to promulgate Section 144 and he did not want to get into trouble. So he would answer the question only when he was safely out of the State!

But he combines in himself the softness of silk with the hardness of steel. Hiding behind Lal Bahadur's soft speech and meek manners is a tough mind which can see with remarkable clarity, get to the root of a problem, take a firm decision and resolutely follow it through. Professor Galbraith, the U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi in 1961-63, said of Lal Bahadur: "There is more iron in his soul than appears on the surface. He listens to every point of view, he makes up his mind firmly, and once he has made them, his decisions stick. . . . He is the kind of man who is trusted."

Lal Bahadur it was who demanded of Nehru that Krishna Menon should go out of the Cabinet after the Chinese aggression. Following the Sirajuddin scandal and an investigation, he insisted upon Keshav Dev Malaviya resigning from the Government. He also pressed for action in regard to the charges against Pratap Singh Kairon and then took a large hand in ridding the Kashmir administration and politics of the evil Bakshi influence.

There could, of course, be no another Nehru to succeed Nehru, even as there could be no Roosevelt to succeed Roosevelt. But Truman, an earthy politician who stepped into the great American President's shoes, made history when he took perhaps the greatest decision in history in ordering the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan; then he sent his country to war in Korea when it was still licking the wounds of the second world war; and then, again, he had the gumption to sack the imperious American pro-consul, General MacArthur, the idol of his people, from the command of U.S. troops in Korea.

Baldwin, mocked by the more brilliant of his colleagues as a mediocrity, shot up as one of the most successful Prime Ministers of Britain, by the masterly way in which he handled the delicate crisis created by King Edward VIII's decision to abdicate in order to marry an American divorcee.

Of the great Clement Attlee himself the late Ernest Bevin said, "Clem's never put forward a single constructive idea, but by God, he's the only man who could have kept us together."

Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded the youthful intellectual and idealist, John Kennedy, in six months in the White House proved he had his fingers on the tabs and, in many ways, even more successful than his predecessor, particularly in the domestic sphere. He played international politics with almost the same *elan* that Kennedy had displayed.

Indeed, it could be said that Lal Bahadur, with his feet solidly planted on the terra firma and too short and practical-minded for his head to reach into the clouds, enjoys an advantage over the idealist and philosopher, Nehru. The latter's gaze took in the entire universe and in the process often tended to miss the landscape in the immediate forefront. Such

was also the advantage that Truman had over Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson has over Kennedy.

While Nehru talked to his beloved people from the lofty, distant dais, Lal Bahadur sat on the dusty ground in their midst, as one of them, shared their life and spoke and understood their language. Nehru had no patience with tedious and often sordid details and problems of the party organization. Indeed, as leader of the party, his unfamiliarity with the cogs and wheels of the party machine was a major handicap for him, which came in the way of quick and correct judgment on party problems brought up to him.

In contrast, Lal Bahadur was thoroughly an 'organisation man' in the happiest sense of the term. He had worked in and for the organisation for many years, and was familiar with every nut and bolt of its machinery. If there was trouble in any of the vast ramifications of the party organisation, he could unerringly put his finger on the trouble-spot. Beginning with 1937 there has not been a general election, either in the State or the national sphere, in which Lal Bahadur has not played a vital role in preparing for them or chalking out their strategy.

Nehru was the grand visionary who dreamt and planned for his country, generated the requisite atmosphere and roused his people for a mighty effort, but he was no organiser and had to leave the implementation to others. This is where his grand plans quite often went awry. Indeed, he was a poor judge of men and his personal loyalties were blind to the point of indiscretion. Lal Bahadur has a penchant for the detail and a passion for the follow-through.

In unanimously electing Lal Bahadur as leader, the party had undoubtedly picked out the most popular and acceptable man in the Congress. Nor can there be any doubt that the best available and the most qualified one has succeeded Nehru. Indeed, of him it could be truly said that he has no enemies, though his 84-year-old, worldly-wise uncle, Ram Parshad dryly remarked: "Yes, he is now the Prime Minister, and he has just created a thousand enemies."

In many ways, Lal Bahadur was the answer to the Indian people's prayers. For there was genuine concern felt in the country that after Nehru we may not get a leader of a truly

all-India stature, held in equal esteem and acceptable to the diverse regions and the egocentric States. The people greatly feared that if a leader of those specifications was not found, the nation's very integrity might receive a setback, with powerful and highly individualistic States pulling in different directions.

Yet another lurking apprehension was: (*a*) among the minorities, that Nehru's successor might not prove as staunch and sincere a secularist as the late Prime Minister, and (*b*) in the non-Hindi South, that a new Prime Minister from the North might prove a Hindi fanatic and seek to ride roughshod over the South's grievance on the language problem.

Lal Bahadur's untarnished secularism and his sincere solicitude for the welfare and rights of the minorities have endeared him to them. The new Prime Minister has always held the view that a great responsibility devolves upon the majority community in ensuring fairplay and security to the minorities. Lal Bahadur captured the hearts of the South when he displayed a genuine sympathy and understanding of the Southerners' insistence on the retention of English as an official language of the country.

Yet another good augury for Lal Bahadur's Prime Ministership is that his election symbolises solidarity between the North and the South and thus constitutes a major factor making for the stability of the Government. In the process he has come to enjoy the all-out backing of the most powerful personality in the Congress today, its President, Kamaraj. It was Kamaraj who assured him the full backing of the solid South. Here was the happy phenomenon of a Northerner installed in the country's prime ministership through a confidence vote of the South.

But the greatest factor backing Lal Bahadur is the knowledge among the Congress ranks and the people that he was Nehru's chosen man for the post. There were many signs available from time to time in the last five years to underline it. Lal Bahadur had been Nehru's close confidant and counsellor for over a decade on Congress organisational matters, and in the last five years, also on governmental problems. He was the main channel of contact between the Prime Minister and the Congress organisation.

After Pandit Pant's death it was Lal Bahadur who stepped into his shoes at the Home Ministry and as counsellor to Nehru. Nehru also sent Lal Bahadur around the country on trouble-shooting missions. All these were pointers in the same direction.

When at Bhubaneshwar Lal Bahadur, then no minister, was given the honour of moving the important 'Democracy and Socialism' resolution and later when he was brought back into the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio, following Nehru's stroke, it was plain for everyone to see that he was marked out by Nehru to succeed him, even though Nehru may not have named him.

With the hard core of the Congress Party being Centrist in political complexion, an uncommitted, dead-centre Lal Bahadur has a distinct advantage in that he attracts the support of the rank and file. Lal Bahadur is tolerant, liberal and truly democratic in spirit and by conviction. He is utterly loyal to his predecessor's ideology and policies. Nehru could safely depend on him to carry them out faithfully, one who would not sabotage all his good work the moment Nehru's back was turned—an important concern for Nehru.

Ghanshyam Das Birla, the noted Indian Industrialist, once described Lal Bahadur as "not left, not right, but a good clean man." If Mahatma Gandhi were alive today, he would have rejoiced in the new Prime Minister's image—truly meek and humble, a man of the people and one of them, sweetly reasonable, devoid of malice, imperturbable of temper, non-violent in thought and speech, tolerant and persuasive.

With the opposition parties, he used to be the most popular man on the Treasury Benches, respected for his honesty, integrity and sincerity. Bombay's Chief Minister, Vasantrao Naik, once remarked that every time he listened to Lal Bahadur speak, he invariably felt like saying to himself: "Here is a most reasonable man. How can anyone ever disagree with him?" With a man so sane, sober, rational, reasonable and moderate, completely devoid of fads—which cannot be said of many of the top Congressmen—people felt safe and sure of themselves.

For example, his views on Prohibition, as expressed at a press conference at Hyderabad on January 1, 1963, are:

"Prohibition is an important issue. We are not going to give it up. But a modification in policy might be considered where Prohibition is in force and has not been a success."

Yet, it might be argued that Lal Bahadur lacked most of the qualities that made for success in politics. Indeed, meekness and humility would normally be considered the greatest liabilities in a profession where one was expected to be harsh, self-opinionated, thick-skinned and ruthless, where to reach to the top one had to walk over the dead bodies of one's comrades. Nor is Lal Bahadur physically a striking personality; or a spell-binder on the platform; or intellectually much of a giant. Then what is the secret of his success?

I would put right political instincts among the first of his qualifications to get to the top of the ladder so comfortably and beating so formidable a rival as veteran Morarji Desai. His political reflexes are quick and correct. In a given crisis or problem Lal Bahadur instinctively reacts rightly. This is a rare gift that makes all the difference to political careers.

Yet another asset in Lal Bahadur is his quick perception, his capacity to get to the bottom of a problem and produce a practical way out acceptable to all parties. Though soft-spoken and ever persuasive in tone, Lal Bahadur can be firm in decision and tenacious in implementation. The late Purshottamdas Tandon, with whom Lal Bahadur worked in close collaboration in the Servants of the People Society in Allahabad, described Lal Bahadur as "a genius in striking balances, handling difficult situations and achieving compromises . . . behind his humility, a rock of toughness."

It seemed as though Fate took a hand in shaping Lal Bahadur's destiny the day he moved to New Delhi in 1951 as General Secretary to the Congress, when Nehru was its President. That was the time when Nehru discovered the potentialities of this little dynamo of a man. His infinite tact and patience, his capacity for hard work and industry, his organisational skill, his genius for pouring oil over troubled waters, were a revelation and an asset to Nehru.

# THE FIRST INFLUENCE

The haughty Brahmin was furious. His newly-paved courtyard was in shambles. A herd of cattle had overnight stampeded across it, churning up the wet ground.

But as the learned man looked closer at the marks left on the surface of the courtyard, his fury turned into intense curiosity. For amid the scores of hoofprints he espied a pair of footprints which struck him as remarkable.

"Good God, these are the feet of royalty," the seer exclaimed, as he sent out men to fetch the cowherd who had driven the herd across his courtyard the previous night. Trembling, crying, begging for forgiveness, the boy was dragged before the Brahmin. The latter patted the cowherd on the back and exclaimed: "My boy, you are to rejoice, not weep. You are going to be a king."

The unkempt little cowherd boy in rags blinked, wiped his nose with the back of his hand and slunk away uncomprehending, bewildered, grateful at getting away so cheaply for so grave an offence.

The incident occurred some 200 years ago in a Mysore village. And some twenty years later, little Hyder truly grew up to be Sultan Hyder Ali, carving a little kingdom for himself. He then went back to that village looking for the learned Brahmin who had predicted his future so correctly, and bestowed on his family a handsome gift of land.

It is not known whether any jyotishi had ever studied the tiny footprints of Nanhe (as Lal Bahadur was known in his childhood among members of his family), as he played on the smooth, moist, sandy bed of the Ganga. If he had, he could have anticipated the boy's sensational rise. Indeed, Lal Bahadur's life story is an Indian version of the "Log Cabin to White House" saga.

It is however true that when hardly a few months old,

Nanhe narrowly escaped being a cowherd boy himself. During a mela, his mother, Ramdulari Devi had gone for a dip in the sacred Ganga, when she got caught in a crush and was violently pushed and jostled. As she fell forward, the three-month old baby lurched out of her arms and was lost amid the milling crowds of pilgrims.

As luck would have it, the infant fell into the basket of a cowherd. Completely mystified at the discovery of a fine baby-boy in his basket, the cowherd prayed and thanked Ganga Mata for the gift. That evening there was much rejoicing in the cowherd's hut. The kind Goddess Ganga had heard the couple's prayers and at last given them a child!

In the meantime, the grief-stricken mother frantically searched for her child all over and then reported to the police. The police traced the child to the cowherd's hut in a neighbouring village, and against the tearful protests of the cowherd and his wife, Nanhe was restored to his mother.

Lal Bahadur himself, however, disclaims much faith in astrology. He is reported to have stated in a press interview that he did not even possess his horoscope, that his family had been so poor that they could not afford to get a jyotishi to cast his horoscope.

"I do not mean to suggest that astrology is absolutely a false science," he explained to me. "However, I am opposed to frequent consultations with astrologers, especially in political work. In general, one loses self-confidence and faith in oneself if one keeps on going after astrological predictions. This is somewhat on the increase now. I sometimes feel Panditji was right when he opposed astrology tooth and nail."

Lal Bahadur was born in a Kayastha family on October 2, 1904, in Mughalsarai, a railway colony seven miles from Banaras. He thus shares his birthday with Mahatma Gandhi. Lal Bahadur is however somehow uncomfortable about sharing the anniversary with the great Mahatma, and is planning to observe his own birthday according to the Hindu calendar.

The Kayasthas of Uttar Pradesh are an advanced, educated and enterprising community. Largely comprising the "white-collar" class, the Kayasthas also man the professions and government service at all levels. Though forming barely five per cent of the State's population, the community holds

about 35 per cent of the jobs in the State Government.

Lal Bahadur is a Srivastava by caste, which appellation he discarded from his name some time later in life, by way of gesture against the Indian caste-system, and prefers to be known as just Lal Bahadur.

From the term "Shastri" appended to his name, many have mistaken Lal Bahadur for a Brahmin; that term in his case only represents a Kashi Vidya Peeth degree, where he studied for four years and became a Shastri in philosophy.

Sri Sharda Prasad, Lal Bahadur's father, was an indigent school teacher, and later a clerk in the Revenue Office, in Allahabad. Lal Bahadur was hardly a year and half when his father died. Thereupon the young widow, still in her twenties, with her three children, two daughters and a son, moved to her father's house.

On this early vicissitude in his life, the Prime Minister mused: "My grandfather loved my mother the most as she was the eldest among his children. When my father died, my grandfather immediately brought her to his house and did not allow her to go to her father-in-law's place, as normally she should have. The old man was overwhelmed at his daughter's sad widowhood at so tender an age."

The large joint family, over which the grandfather, Hazari Lal, presided, comprised grand-uncles, grand-aunts, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and cousins. But the patriarch of the house bestowed abundant and equal affection and care on the large number of children in the family, and Nanhe loved to bask in his grandfather's affection. Lal Bahadur nostalgically insists, "Even my father could not have looked after me better."

Lal Bahadur lived with his grandfather in Mughalsarai until he was ten and passed his sixth class. Thereafter, in order to join high school, he moved to Banaras to stay with his maternal uncle (i.e., his mother's sister's husband) Raghunath Prasad. In the holy city he joined Harishchandra High School. Raghunath Prasad, who was a head clerk in the Banaras Municipality, was a remarkable personality.

His high sense of duty—he was an ideal *grahast*—and strength of character and integrity left a great impress on young Lal Bahadur's mind. The deep trait of *nishkam karma*

in his character, Lal Bahadur must owe to his uncle who appears to have been the first influence in Lal Bahadur's life. He greatly admired the old patriarch.

Raghunath Prasad was too poor to give his large family much more than his devotion and affection, of which however he gave them in unstinted measure. Nor was the children's education neglected. At the age of 60, when he retired from service, he opened a shop in order to supplement his income of a meagre pension.

It is however not true, as is popularly believed, that at any time Lal Bahadur swam his way to school because he did not have the money to pay for the boatfare. This was actually a distortion of another incident.

It was one of those many mela days in Banaras. Lal Bahadur with a band of his friends went across the river to attend the mela. After wandering all day at the mela, the boys one by one turned homeward and took the boat to get across. But curiously enough, Lal Bahadur was seen to linger behind. Finally, when all his mates had left, and under the cover of dusk, Lal Bahadur plunged into the river, to the horror and admiration of the onlookers, and swam across half a mile to the other bank.

The truth was that Lal Bahadur had no money to pay the boatman and was too sensitive and proud to let his comrades know about it. He therefore pretended that he wanted to stay longer at the mela, and then, once all his friends were out of sight, swam home.

Lal Bahadur has been a good and venturesome swimmer. There were however at least two occasions in his teenage days when he was nearly drowned, having gone beyond his depths. On both occasions that happened in a tank, not river. On the second occasion, when he nearly went under, as he recalls with horror, he had on his shoulders the three-year-old child of his favourite schoolmaster.

Like other children in the alley, Lal Bahadur and his cousins, when they returned home from school in the evening, loved to play modern games like football and hockey. But they could not afford a football or hockey sticks. So they would collect the flowers of the Khajur tree and mould them into a ball and tie it up with cloth, and that, if it was big-

sized, was a football, or if small, a hockey ball.

For hockey sticks, they would hack slender, sinewy branches from a tree and chop one end of the sticks L shaped. For all that, the games they played in the open space outside their home were as exciting as any matches staged by their wealthier schoolmates.

It is interesting to note that among all the stuff young Lal Bahadur read at school—and he was a voracious reader who, at this age, read everything he could lay his hands on, whether he fully understood what he read or not—the boy's favourite lines were a verse from Guru Nanak, which he liked to mutter to himself like a *mantra.*

It is possible that reciting the magic verse instilled in him self-confidence and self-reliance. Indeed, he raised that verse into a life-long motto for himself. As a child, everyone in the family called Lal Bahadur Nanhe, the small one. Nanak's verse read:

*"Nanak Nanhe hai raho, Jaise Nanhee doob,*
*Aur rookh sookh jayenge, doob khoob kee khoob."*

("O, Nanak, remain a small one, as small as grass; Other plants will wither away, but grass will remain ever green.")

Yet another incident of his early life, illustrative of his highly sensitive nature is to be found in a story narrated about his experience as a boy of six. On one such afternoon when a young idle mind is a devil's workshop, a band of boys raided a public garden for the sheer mischief of it.

As his comrades climbed trees and helped themselves to fruit, Nanhe looked around in pensive doubt, content to pluck a flower from a bush at hand.

Just then, one of the boys raised the alarm, and instantly all the boys, except Nanhe, vanished, and the mali caught hold of Nanhe and gave him a thorough dressing-down.

Nanhe thereupon protested: "I am a poor, fatherless boy. You can't do that to me?"

The Mali smiled and retorted: "All the more reason why, my boy, you should be better behaved."

Impressionable Nanhe took the lesson to heart. He came away muttering to himself the mali's words of wisdom: "All the more reason why you should be better behaved." He then swore that he would behave better than others; and said to himself that he had to do that because he was fatherless!

At school Lal Bahadur was an average student, rather quiet and reserved, tending to keep his counsel to himself. But his teachers were all fond of him. Referring to his school days, the Prime Minister said to me: "I don't know why my teachers had a great liking for me. They used to take me to their homes and treat me as though I was one of their children."

He was weak in arithmetic, but good at geometry and algebra, and by scoring extra marks in the latter two subjects, he made up for his deficiency in arithmetic. He was however very good at English, which was his favourite subject, as also at history. His teacher always used to compliment him for his correct English pronunciation.

On one occasion, when he was studying in Standard IV, the inspector visited his class, and it was a proud moment for young Lal Bahadur when the teacher named him as the best student of the class and chose him to read a passage from the English text. When he read the passage, the inspector came up to him, patted him on the back and congratulated him on his performance.

A boy of diminutive size and that sensitive, one would imagine, would be an easy victim of the harassing attentions of the big bullies of the class and school. But curiously enough, such was not Nanhe's experience at school. "During my school days, I had a good time," Lal Bahadur recalls. "Luckily, my school mates were very friendly towards me and I don't remember of any occasion of an older boy having ever teased or bullied me."

And then he mused, "When I gave up my studies to join the Non-co-operation Movement, I can still recall how the boys gathered round me and listened to me patiently and respectfully. I never bothered anyone, and, on the whole, I got good treatment from all. My friends were all of good behaviour and good in character."

As he grew up, Lal Bahadur's interests broadened and

matured, and his mind gradually began to turn towards life's more serious problems. He now became aware of his obligations to society and decided he should lead a more purposeful life. The cry of Swaraj had already begun to ring in his ears.

He avidly read news and literature about the activities of the Indian National Congress and reports of speeches and statements of the great political leaders of the time, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bepin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Bannerjee and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and thrilled to them.

Lokamanya Tilak once visited Banaras. Lal Bahadur at the time happened to be some fifty miles away from the city. He was dying to see and hear the great patriot speak, but he didn't have the money for the rail fare. He wrung his hands in despair and then gritted his teeth and borrowed the fare to make the trip to the holy city and heard the Lokamanya speak. At that meeting Tilak enigmatically said, "When our alien rulers are in difficulties, we must think what we should do." Young Lal Bahadur returned home, with the sentence buzzing in his head.

Lal Bahadur's first and unforgettable memory of Gandhiji goes back to the time when he was eleven years old. In 1915, the Mahatma came to Banaras to lay the foundation-stone of the buildings of the Banaras Hindu University. In the course of his speech, he denounced British rule in the country and its props, the Indian Princes.

As the speech proceeded, the officials present walked out one after the other, and so did the Princes. The Maharaja of Baroda was presiding over the function, and finally, he too vacated the chair and left the hall. Thereupon Gandhiji ended his speech with the remark: "Now that the chairman has also left, I must stop."

When the school staged plays, Lal Bahadur took roles in them. For example, in the Mahabharat story staged by the school, appropriately enough, he played Kripacharya, the elder statesman of the epic, highly respected by both sides, even though he was the Kaurava King Duryodhana's adviser, to whom he constantly counselled moderation.

About this time Lal Bahadur also enrolled himself in the boy scout movement—the Bharat Seva Samiti's and not the

officially-supported Baden-Powell's—and went out with other boys on hiking trips and picnics. In the informal atmosphere of the scout camp, he at first listened to, and later actively participated in, discussions on problems arising out of India's sufferings under the foreign imperialistic rule.

A common topic of conversation among the patriotic young Indians in those days was the parallel Irish revolutionary struggle against British rule. The boys excitedly talked about the exploits of the I.R.A. and read about the romantic escape of de Valera and the adventures of Michael Collins in their fight against British rule in their land.

He was, however, even then, a lad who knew where he was going. As Tribhuvan Narayan Singh, a mate of his childhood days and life-long companion and friend, told me: "Even in those days, Lal Bahadur betrayed a hard core of obstinacy hidden behind the soft velvety surface of his exterior. He always had his way in boys' arguments, generally on the strength of his reasoning and persuasiveness. He always knew his mind."

# AT THE OTHER VARSITY

A SLIM figure of medium height, with lively eyes, a trimmed moustache, hair receding and a spartan appearance, Nishkameshwar Misra was much more than a Maths and English teacher to the senior boys of Harishchandra High School in Banaras.

To the impressionable teenagers, Misra was a guru in the true ancient Hindu tradition. He was their hero and model, preceptor and mentor, friend, guide and philosopher, who concerned himself with the body, soul and intellect of his young wards and strove to give them a well-rounded education that extended beyond the text-books and the classroom.

The boys eagerly looked forward to his classes and hung on his lips as he told them stories about the patriotic valour of Rana Pratap and Shivaji and, among the latter day heroes, of Tilak and his lone and courageous fight against alien rule. He underscored to the impressionable boys before him the Lokamanya's magic slogan "Swaraj is our birthright".

Misra would so organize his periods that he would finish the day's lessons half an hour earlier and devote that half an hour to stuffing the boys' minds with patriotic lore. This was where patriotism was first kindled in Lal Bahadur's heart. Thus when the call came from Gandhiji to come out and give battle to the British rule, at least six out of the thirty boys in Misra's class responded. Among them were Lal Bahadur, Tribhuvan Narayan Singh and Algurai Shastri.

Misra also organised the boys' extra-curricular activities, and got them interested in debating and dramatics, and he was also their scout-master. He thus spent a lot of time, both in class and outside, with the boys, and proved a major influence in shaping their character and personality.

When Gandhiji lauched the Non-co-operation Movement in 1921, Lal Bahadur was 16 and about to appear for his School Leaving Examination. In the course of his whirlwind tour of the country, the Mahatma touched Banaras. Lal Bahadur listened to Gandhiji's inspiring speech with bated breath. And then and there, he made up his mind to follow the Mahatma.

The unqualified and spectacular success of the Champaran satyagraha in 1917, where Gandhiji released the oppressed tenants from the medieval tyranny of the white indigo planters; the triumph of the Kaira civil disobedience campaign in 1918, and the explosive agitation against the Rowlatt Act in 1919, culminating in the horrible Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy, in which 400 were shot dead and over a thousand wounded, had electrified the atmosphere in the country.

A militant wave of nationalism was sweeping the land. Gandhiji's prestige and popularity were at their peak at this moment. The response to the Mahatma's call for Non-co-operation with the British Government was countrywide and unprecedented.

In December 1920, the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress finally passed Gandhiji's historic resolution launching the Civil Disobedience Movement by a big majority. The resolution exhorted people to give up titles bestowed by the British Government, non-co-operate with the Government; to boycott government institutions including offices, law courts, schools and colleges as also foreign trade, to refuse to pay taxes and to encourage hand-spinning and hand-weaving and "to make the utmost contribution of self-sacrifice to the National movement."

In January 1921, some of the nationalist-minded professors of Banaras Hindu University resigned their posts in response to the Nagpur resolution. Among them was Acharya J. B. Kripalani. They went round the city in procession calling upon teachers and students to come out of colleges and schools and fight for swaraj.

Lal Bahadur, Tribhuvan Narayan Singh, Algurai Shastri and three other boys from Harishchandra High School walked out of the class and joined the procession.

The decision upset all the plans for Lal Bahadur's future.

It shocked his uncle and other relatives, and broke his mother's heart. He was her only son and staff of life, and he had a sister to look after and marry off. Many thought it was an act of high irresponsibility on the part of Lal Bahadur to give up studies and court prison and ruin.

They tried to dissuade him from what they considered a disastrous course of action. But once he had made up his mind, nothing could get Lal Bahadur to change it. Indeed, his was not an ill-considered, hasty act. He had coolly weighed the pros and cons of the step he was taking and come to the deliberate conclusion that he was doing the right thing.

Lal Bahadur's first encounter with the Police, in 1921, following his participation in a banned procession and meeting, was no more than an arrest. He was let off, without any trial and conviction. He thereafter joined Kashi Vidya Peeth to resume his studies, interrupted when he walked out of Harishchandra High School and joined the Non-co-operation Movement.

The Kashi Vidya Peeth was a purely nationalist institution, very much suspect in the eyes of the British Government. It was started by a few patriotic Indian educationists, simultaneously with similar institutions launched in other parts of the country. It sought to provide an alternative avenue of education for those youths who had thrown up studies in response to the country's call.

This institution was conducted and manned by some of the greatest intellectuals and patriots in the country. Dr. Bhagwandas, a renowned savant and philosopher, was its first principal, and among the professors were Acharya Narendra Dev, Dr. Sampurnanand, Acharya J. B. Kripalani and Sri Prakasa. The institution breathed an exhilarating free, non-conformist atmosphere, where the boys swapped ideas and took apart 'isms' and ideologies as in a laboratory.

Typical subjects of college debates were Violence versus Non-violence as an instrument of achieving independence and 'Does our Salvation lie in large-scale industries or cottage industries?' Curiously enough, at the latter debate Lal Bahadur had argued in favour of large-scale industries! The

students' reading fare ranged from Tolstoy and Lenin to Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

Among Lal Bahadur's contemporaries at the Vidya Peeth were Algurai Shastri, Harihar Nath Shastri, Balkrishna Keskar, Tribhuvan Narayan Singh, Vibhuti Misra and Rajaram Shastri—all of them today in the frontline of Congress politics. Lal Bahadur studied at the Vidya Peeth for four years, taking his degree (Shastri) in Philosophy in the first division. He and Rajaram Shastri shared the honours as the first two students.

At the Vidya Peeth, Lal Bahadur lived a busy, crowded life, trying to squeeze into those four years as much learning and human experience as he could. He mugged his class text-books, put in as much general reading as he could, intensively participated in extracurricular activities.

Physically, however, to cover every day six to seven miles on foot between college and home was an ordeal for Lal Bahadur. On some days, he had to walk even sixteen miles a day when he went home after the morning classes. He could not afford a bicycle.

It was here that Lal Bahadur gave finishing touches to his life's unique philosophy. He was profoundly influenced by Dr. Bhagwandas, who apart from being the principal of the college, was also his professor of philosophy.

"A unique personality, a man of high aesthetic sense, so simple, yet so noble in his tastes and habits"—is how the Prime Minister described the great savant. He added, "His lectures in philosophy were most illuminating. There was always a freshness in his approach."

Dr. Bhagwandas was noted for the "Samanvaya Vada" approach to life—a philosophical approach that sought a synthesis between opposing viewpoints, looked at both sides of a case, and strove for moderation and reconciliation. That is where, possibly, one has to trace the predominant streak of "Samanvaya Vada" in Lal Bahadur's own mental make-up and his gift to reconcile seemingly conflicting views.

Indeed, if ever there is a practising 'non-aligner' in his personal as well as political life, it is Lal Bahadur. Non-involvement seems to be the very essence of his life's philosophy. He instinctively keeps out of all conflicts,

whether ideological or factional, in the Congress Party. He has always managed to keep the hem of his garment clear of dirty politics, and has kept himself above petty political manoeuvring.

That, incidentally, is his great advantage in his present key post as the Prime Minister of India and leader of the Congress Party, with his impartiality and integrity accepted all round.

Soon after coming out of the Kashi Vidya Peeth, in 1926, Lal Bahadur joined the Servants of the People Society as a life-member. It was not easy to become a life-member of this unique institution, but Lala Lajpat Rai was greatly impressed with the young man's earnestness and passion for public service and offered to ordain him into that order of dedication to the service of the country.

The Servants of the People Society was started by Lala Lajpat Rai in 1921 and was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi. The object of the Society is to enlist and train national missionaries whose ducy is to work for educational, cultural, social, economic and political advancement of the country.

Every member undertakes to work for the Society for at least 20 years, and during that period it should be his endeavour to lead a pure personal life. Poverty and simplicity are enjoined upon him, and he was paid at first Rs. 60 per month as his allowance, which was later raised to Rs. 100 per month. Service of the country is to occupy first place in his thoughts, and in serving the country, he is not to be actuated by motives of personal advancement.

The rules of the Society also insist that all new recruits should devote themselves exclusively to the constructive work assigned to them by the Society and will not be permitted to enter the legislature for a period of at least ten years.

At first, he worked for a year in Muzaffarnagar on Harijan uplift, serving as an apprentice to Algurai Shastri, who had joined the Society earlier. Later, when ordained a life-member, he was moved to the headquarters in Allahabad to work under Purshottamdas Tandon.

The Prime Minister acknowledges: "It was due to my life-membership of the Society that I got an opportunity to serve my country the most. The Society has been instrumental

in inculcating in me the true meaning of the term 'servants of the people'."

Lal Bahadur is the current president of the Servants of the People Society. He succeeded Babu Purshottamdas Tandon, on latter's death. Tandon himself was the second president of the body, having taken over from its founder-President, Lala Lajpat Rai.

About this time, in 1927, Lal Bahadur got married to Lalita Devi of Mirzapur, and the only dowry he got was a charkha and a few yards of khadi. It was not that his father-in-law could not afford to pay by way of dowry anything more than that, but the bridegroom would not accept anything more.

One of the most thrilling memories of this exciting period for Lal Bahadur was the unfurling of India's flag of Independence in 1929 by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress President of the year, on the bank of the Ravi. Lal Bahadur was 25 then and still likes to dwell upon the exhilaration of that great moment and the patriotic fervour that was roused in the country by the event.

There followed the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement, announced with a thundering resolution passed at country-wide public meetings, held to observe Purna Swaraj Day on January 26, 1930.

The resolution declared: "We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule" that had resulted in political, cultural and spiritual disaster to the country. It reaffirmed faith in non-violence and announced the country's determination "to withdraw as far as possible all voluntary association from the British Government and prepare for civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes."

After due notice to the Viceroy, as was his wont, the Civil Disobedience Movement was launched by Gandhiji on March 12, 1930, with his historic march to Dandi to offer salt satyagraha. With that, a countrywide fuse was lit that set the country ablaze.

In Allahabad, Lal Bahadur played a leading role in the no-rent campaign. He was at that time secretary of the District Congress Committee, and they all had a tough time

getting round Pandit Motilal Nehru to agree to it. The latter was doubtful about the wisdom and advisability of the revolutionary move. Ultimately, the younger element persuaded the patriarch to acquiesce in their action, and the campaign was duly launched.

The Government took a serious view of the agitation and took drastic measures to combat it. In his very first speech in a village outside Allahabad, Lal Bahadur exhorted the peasants to refuse to pay the rent. He was immediately arrested and brought to the city and was convicted and sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment.

From now on till 1945, Lal Bahadur's life was one continuous movement to and from British prisons, with varying intervals in between. For thereafter he was again jailed in 1932, 1934, 1941 and 1942—in all seven times, with a total of nine years spent behind bars.

Apart from Kashi Vidya Peeth, where he spent four years and took a degree in Philosophy, the British Prison was Lal Bahadur's, as was many another Congressman's, great university from which his mind and intellect benefited most. "I threw myself in the political struggle. In every movement, I had to go to jail," Lal Bahadur recalls, looking back to those exciting days. "My jail life was interesting from more than one point of view. I used to do a lot of reading every time I went to jail."

It was in jail that he read Kant and Hegel and Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley, as also a lot of communist literature including Marx and Lenin. In addition, while in jail, Lal Bahadur translated the biography of Madam Curie into Hindi. He has on his hands an unfinished Hindi manuscript of 300 pages of the history of the 1942 "Quit India" struggle, which he hopes to complete some day when he has leisure!

In jail, Lal Bahadur earned reputation as a model prisoner. He was well-behaved and showed a high degree of discipline and orderliness, and generally exercised a healthy influence over the mass of bickering, nervy, irritable political prisoners, wanting to gouge each other's eyes at the slightest provocation. By his personal example as well as his persuasive ways, he got his comrades to rise above petty matters

and live orderly, fruitful lives, with hours apportioned to study and discussion, reading and physical exercise.

Many of the political prisoners cringed and sought petty favours from jail officials, such as an extra ration of *bidis*. Lal Bahadur, far from seeking favours, was always prepared to share with his comrades whatever amenities he personally enjoyed. For example, two prisoners had to share one oil lamp at night, which meant taking turns at the lamp. Lal Bahadur entirely gave up his turn at the lamp, so that his mate could have undisturbed use of the lamp.

Lal Bahadur himself used the indigenous *diva*, with an improvised cotton wick soaked in thick castor oil. He did much of his night reading by this feeble, flickering light. Incidentally, he read Tolstoy's Anna Karenina at one sitting, round the clock, interrupted only for the prison chores. His life in prison was planned to the minute, with hours fixed for sleep, meals, studies, prayers, and exercise. The younger political prisoners greatly admired him for his methodical ways, but found them difficult to emulate.

Lal Bahadur takes a dim view of Nehru's skill at badminton! Once, in Naini Jail, Lal Bahadur and an Anglo-Indian convict paired against Nehru and the Jailor, and the former pair easily beat the latter in straight two games. In jail, besides badminton, Lal Bahadur also played volley ball, at both of which he attained astonishing proficiency.

When he was still in Naini Jail, one of his daughters fell seriously ill. But Lal Bahadur would not seek parole because the jail authorities expected him to undertake in writing that he would not take part in the Congress movement while temporarily out. It was never his intention to do anything of the kind, but it went against his grain and sense of honour to give such an undertaking.

Thereupon, the Jailor who knew Lal Bahadur's high integrity, let him go on fifteen days' parole without laying down any written conditions. But alas, the day Lal Bahadur reached home, his daughter died. Lal Bahadur performed the last rites and immediately went back to jail, without utilising the 15 days' parole.

A year later, Lal Bahadur's four-year old son was down with typhoid. He was running a temperature as high as 104

degrees. Lal Bahadur availed of a week's parole, of course without any written undertaking.

When the week of parole came to an end, the child's condition if anything got worse. The jail authorities now insisted upon his giving a written undertaking to eschew political activity during the period of extended parole. Lal Bahadur point-blank refused to give any such undertaking.

As the time for the father's return to jail drew near, the child's fever touched 105-106 degrees. The father stood by the son's bed for long hours, as if rooted to the ground, with his big expressive eyes pinned on the child.

Through fever-swollen lips the child whispered: "Babuji, please don't go." Tears rolled down the father's cheeks. Then, he suddenly shook his head, as if waking from a dream, and gritted his teeth, namaskared every one and briskly walked out and marched back to jail, without once looking backwards.

This was the period in his life when the family lived in utter penury, literally not knowing where the next meal would come from. Indeed, his daughter died primarily because he could not afford the cost of the medical treatment.

Many years later, in August 1964, addressing the Secretaries of the Government of India, the Prime Minister said he knew what poverty was and recalled the days when he lived on Rs. 2½ per month. As a Minister of Government, when he lived in spacious bungalows, he refused to be corrupted by the affluence of his new status, and stuck to his simple way of life.

In 1937, following the new reforms ushered in by the Government of India Act, 1935, the Congress fought the elections to the provincial legislatures, and captured large majorities and office in almost all of them. But following the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the Congress Governments resigned in all provinces, and the Congress went back into the wilderness, after being in office for hardly two and a half years. And once again the tension between the British Government and the Congress began to rise.

The Congress found itself in a dilemma. It was one with Britain in its uncompromising opposition to Nazism and

fascism, which the Congress had unequivocally, and again and again, condemned over the past few years. But the Congress could not co-operate with the British war effort as long as India was excluded from the war aim professed by the Allies, namely, making the world safe for democracy and freedom.

The discontent simmered for a year before it boiled over in October 1940 in the shape of individual satyagraha inaugurated by Vinoba Bhave. He was duly arrested. Jawaharlal Nehru who was to follow Vinoba was arrested before the event. He was followed by other individual satyagrahis. Early among them was Lal Bahadur, who was nabbed and sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

The slogan on their lips was "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men and money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance."

By the close of the year, 11 members of the Working Committee, 176 A.I.C.C. members, 29 ex-Ministers and more than 400 members of Central and Provincial legislatures were jailed. The satyagraha had four phases, culminating in 1941 with the participation of the rank and file Congressmen. By midsummer of that year 20,000 were convicted, with 14,000 in jail at one time. But the Churchill Government in London paid no heed to the righteous cry of the Congress. Repression continued unabated. And nationalist frustration piled up in the country.

In the first week of August 1942, the All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay in a supercharged atmosphere. On August 8, after great deliberation, the A.I.C.C. passed the historic 'Quit India' resolution. The die was cast. The Rubicon had been crossed. 'Do or die' was the new slogan handed to the people by Gandhiji.

The resolution itself pitched India's demand of independence at a high and noble key and set it in the international context of the Allied war aim of fighting totalitarian Nazism to defend and preserve democracy and freedom.

The resolution argued: "The ending of the British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throw-

ing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, fascism and imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and give these nations, whose ally India would be, moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of imperialism and the taint of imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations."

The resolution then declared: "The Committee resolves therefore to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale."

On August 9, at 4 a.m., the Police Commissioner arrived at Birla House, Bombay, to take Gandhiji into custody. Simultaneously, all the members of the Congress Working Committee and other prominent Congressmen were rounded up. They all, including Gandhiji, were put in a special train waiting for them at the Victoria Terminus.

The special train unloaded its precious cargo at the way-side station of Chinchwad, from where Gandhiji was driven to the Aga Khan Palace in Poona for detention, and his comrades were shoved into waiting lorries and taken to the Yerawada Prison.

Those Congress leaders assembled in Bombay, who were still free, dispersed to their respective home provinces, fully anticipating their interception before reaching their destinations. Those who escaped arrest went underground to wage a non-violent guerilla warfare against the British Raj. It took the shape of sabotage of communications and strategic points.

Following the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other top Congress leaders, a wave of indignation spread across the country and led to disturbances all over the land, followed by unprecedented repression by a Government anxious to demonstrate to the people that it meant business with the Congress.

"The disturbances were crushed with all the weight of the Government," boasted Premier Winston Churchill in the British House of Commons. With his typical hauteur, he

then added, "Let me, however, make this clear, in case there should be any mistake about it in any quarter: We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's first Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."

After the memorable Bombay session of the A.I.C.C., Lal Bahadur, along with the U.P. contingent, left for U.P. by train. Lal Bahadur himself alighted at Naini station instead of at Allahabad to escape the police net. At the Naini station, his comrades lifted him over the railings behind the platform instead of his having to run the gauntlet of the police by passing through the main gate.

For the first week of his underground life, Lal Bahadur hid himself in the upper floor of Anand Bhavan, the Nehru family home in Allahabad. From here he operated his duplicating machine and churned out cyclostyled circulars by the ton, with instructions and exhortations, for distribution among the underground workers.

Very soon, the Police turned up at Anand Bhavan with a search and arrest warrant for a search of the house and for the arrest of Vijayalakshmi Pandit, then still free and living in Anand Bhavan. Vijayalakshmi sent word upstairs about the unwelcome visitors, and engaged the police officers with small talk and then leisurely got ready to accompany them.

It was just lucky that the police perfunctorily searched the ground floor, took Mrs. Pandit into custody and seemed to be satisfied with their quarry to bother about searching the upper storey of the house.

In the meantime, upstairs, Lal Bahadur kept himself frightfully busy, tearing to tiny bits the heaps of circulars containing instructions to the underground workers and stuffing them into the toilet, the nearest available and most convenient receptable. Incidentally, the next day, it took the best plumber available in Allahabad a good part of a day to clear the lavatory of the paper choking it. Lal Bahadur had apparently done a thorough job of it!

Lal Bahadur's next hide-out was Keshav Dev Malaviya's house, while the latter himself was hiding elsewhere! He managed to move about surreptitiously in the countryside, instructing and cheering the underground workers and distributing assignments to them. It was not until one fine

morning when he stepped on to the footboard of a tonga in the heart of Allahabad city and delivered a harangue in a deliberate act of defiance of the law that the Police discovered him and took him into custody.

# TO WIDER HORIZONS

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU was Lal Bahadur's "fairy-god-mother". Nehru would appear to have kept a kindly eye on Lal Bahadur's political career right from his early Allahabad days. It was Nehru who inducted Lal Bahadur into Congress politics in that city, and thus set his foot on the ladder of success that in 1964 landed him into the Prime Ministership of India.

"Whenever Jawaharlalji got an opportunity, he gave me full scope for work," the Prime Minister frankly acknowledged. "At his instance, I held office of the Secretary and President of the District and City Congress Committees at Allahabad in the thirties. When he became President of the U.P.P.C.C., he made me the General Secretary of that body. Similarly, in 1951, he made me the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, when he became its President. He had some faith in me that I would do well at any task entrusted to me."

In his own state Lal Bahadur had early earned a reputation as a tough Congressman to whom jail-going, facing the police lathi and a life of suffering, sacrifice and insecurity held no terrors. Truly non-violent, yet a man of infinite courage, completely dedicated to the cause, unconcerned about reward and incapable of bearing ill-will, Lal Bahadur fulfilled the rigorous qualifications laid down by Mahatma Gandhi for a satyagrahi.

But Lal Bahadur also soon came to be known as a little dynamo of energy and a skilled organiser who could turn his hand to any task entrusted to him and make a success of it. His analytical mind and persuasive ways made him a first class committeeman. His modesty and objectivity of approach always compelled the attention of every section around a table.

Lal Bahadur won his spurs in public life in the early thirties, on the Allahabad Municipal Board, on which he served for seven years. He was also a member of the Allahabad Improvement Trust for four years. On the Allahabad Municipal Board, his colleagues were Vijayalakshmi Pandit and her husband, R. S. Pandit. That is where his gift for committee work was cultivated.

It was during this period that Lal Bahadur came in close contact with the Nehru family. While Motilal took a fatherly interest in the earnest young man, Jawaharlal came to take a liking for him, and sought every opportunity to push him forward in the local Congress arena. Thus, in 1930, Lal Bahadur was elected general secretary of the Allahabad District Congress Committee of which he was later made President.

The latter post he held until 1936, when he migrated to Lucknow to function on the wider provincial stage. In 1936, when the Congress fought the elections for the provincial legislatures, Lal Bahadur and Vijayalakshmi Pandit were both returned to the U.P. Assembly from two of Allahabad constituencies. Indira was then however still in her teens and too young for active politics and jail-going. If in Uttar Pradesh every village was Congress-minded, the credit must be shared between Jawaharlal Nehru, Purshottamdas Tandon and Lal Bahadur.

In 1936, the U. P. Congress appointed a non-official committee to study and report on land reforms in the province, where the feudal zamindari system was rampant. Lal Bahadur was chosen as the convenor of the committee. His work on the committee revealed yet another facet of his personality.

He burnt the midnight oil for weeks, devoured all available literature and documents on the subject and produced a masterly report that hit the imagination of the Congress 'top brass' as well as the officialdom. Subsequently, in 1937, when the Congress took office in the province, it put through land reforms legislation which was largely based on that report.

Following the outbreak of World War Two, in September 1939, the Congress resigned office in all the provinces, after being in power for hardly two and a half years. That was hardly enough time for Lal Bahadur to make a mark in the

legislative and administrative spheres. For that, he had to wait for well-nigh another decade. In between intervened a long and rigorous spell during which, when he was not in jail, he lived a hunted life.

But the credit for discovering and promoting Lal Bahadur's talent in the governmental sphere should go to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. And it must be said for Lal Bahadur that he lived up to the exacting demands of the 'Tiger of Kumaon'.

At the end of the War, the Congress decided to fight the elections and capture power in the provinces. Lal Bahadur was appointed secretary of the U.P. Parliamentary Board, and in that capacity, organising the Congress election campaign in the province fell to his lot. It was then that he, for the first time, revealed his genius for organising, his mastery over election strategy and his grip over detail.

During the entire election campaign Lal Bahadur lived, ate and slept in the U.P.C.C. office. He was available on the telephone round the clock to Congress candidates and workers from any part of the province. In the elections held at the end of 1945, the Congress was returned in thumping majorities in all states except in two or three dominated by the Muslim League in the pre-partition India.

Pandit Pant, as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, was looking around for young men of promise to apprentice them as parliamentary secretaries. Among the names recommended by his advisers was Lal Bahadur Shastri. Pant knew Lal Bahadur only vaguely, but whatever little he knew of the young man, as secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee and Parliamentary Board, attracted him.

Pant immediately appointed Lal Bahadur as his Parliamentary Secretary. Along with him, appointed as Parliamentary Secretaries, were such ambitious and extrovert personalities as Chandra Bhanu Gupta, Keshav Dev Malaviya, and J. P. Rawat. Indeed, in contrast with them, Pandit Pant must have appreciated a quiet, apparently unambitious man as his junior. In no time, Lal Bahadur forged ahead of his contemporaries. Pant himself described Lal Bahadur as "likable, hard-working, devoted, trustworthy and non-controversial."

Pant was in the habit of working late in the office, and so was Lal Bahadur, whereas the other ministers and parliamentary secretaries preferred to knock off for the day at a decent hour of the evening. It thus happened that the chief and his young and late-working parliamentary secretary began to go home together every evening in the former's car. That brought the two frequently together and the 'Tiger of Kumaon' thus came to study Lal Bahadur from close quarters and developed a great affection for him, which the latter fully reciprocated.

In 1947, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai moved to New Delhi as a Central Minister, and Pant appointed his protégé, Lal Bahadur, as Minister of Police and Transport. In both these portfolios, Lal Bahadur made a quick mark. In the Police Department, he introduced many reforms that tightened up the efficiency of the police force and at the same time re-oriented the policemen's attitude towards the people.

As Police Minister he proved himself completely above communal bias at a time when there was so much communal tension which frequently erupted into strife and rioting. He enforced law and order with firmness. It was Lal Bahadur who started the Prantiya Raksha Dal (National Guards) in Uttar Pradesh. A large number of young men were encouraged to join this semi-official organisation, which particularly came in handy for civil defence in the border areas during the 1962 Chinese war emergency.

Lal Bahadur was also responsible for recruiting into the upper cadre of the Police Service a large number of younger persons who had gone to jail in the 1942 Movement. That step injected an element of popular outlook in a police force traditionally so isolated from and distrusted by the people.

As Minister of Transport, his greatest achievement was to introduce, for the first time, a completely state-owned and state-run transport service throughout the province, which gave better and more efficient service to the public than ever before.

A radical measure introduced by Lal Bahadur in the nationalised bus service was the employment of women as bus-conductors. In the highly conservative, tradition-bound, male-dominated society of Uttar Pradesh, this was a startling

innovation to which the people could never reconcile themselves. No sooner Lal Bahadur moved out of the State to New Delhi, the measure was undone. In Lal Bahadur's own office in Lucknow, a senior lady official was his personal assistant, who proved highly efficient, in addition to being quiet and industrious.

It is given to few Police Ministers to be popular. But Lal Bahadur seems to have been an exception. He was the first Police Minister in U.P. to direct the use of the water-hose to disperse a demonstrating mob. In 1949, students of Lucknow University went on strike and ran amuck. The Police Minister refused to permit the Police to use their lathis to control the situation, and instead ordered them to use the water-hose, which they did to good effect.

His popularity was highlighted when during one of students' numerous strikes, the police intervened and the students were found shouting not "Lal Bahadur hai hai" but "Sampurnanand hai hai." Sampurnanand's sin was that he was the Education Minister, whereas the one responsible for the Police intervention was the Police Minister, Lal Bahadur!

Yet another anecdote of this period underlines the human side of the man. On one occasion, in the countryside in Uttar Pradesh, a demonstrating crowd went out of hand. The Police Minister himself happened to be present on the spot.

The mob violently attacked the small police force on the spot. Lal Bahadur immediately issued instructions against the police retaliating in self-defence. That evening dozens of policemen were badly injured by brickbats and were hospitalised.

After the event, Lal Bahadur went round the hospital wards, personally visiting the wounded policemen and giving them a word of cheer. In doing so, however, he searched his heart with the question whether he had done the right thing in ordering the policemen not to retaliate even in self-defence in the overnight incident.

Years later, when he was Home Minister in New Delhi, Lal Bahadur narrated that incident in the Lok Sabha to illustrate the point that it was difficult for the police not to retaliate in self-defence when their life was in danger. Thereupon Nath Pai, a PSP Opposition Member, interjected, "We

don't have men of your courage and vision everywhere; that is the pity."

The Socialist member's courtesy to Lal Bahadur incidentally underlined the cordial relations that have subsisted between him personally and members of the Opposition, who generally never have a good word to say about those who occupy the treasury benches.

In 1949, Lal Bahadur was watching the Commonwealth *versus* India cricket match at Kanpur—he is fond of cricket, and rarely misses a chance of watching a Test Match. There was some commotion on the match ground when students indulged in rowdyism in the girls' sector of the stands. The police sought to restrain the students. Thereupon the students turned upon the police.

Lal Bahadur intervened. After a lot of shouting and argument, the students agreed to accept his advice provided he, in his turn, agreed to keep the "lal pagree" out of the match ground the next day. Lal Bahadur solemnly promised to abide by their condition.

The next day, the students were furious when they found the police still there on the match ground. They demanded an explanation of the Police Minister. Lal Bahadur smilingly replied: "I fulfilled my promise to you faithfully. You demanded yesterday that the 'lal pagree' should not be seen on the ground today. There is not a single lal pagree on the ground today." The Police had that day turned out on the cricket match ground in khaki pagrees instead of lal pagrees! When the students found they had been outwitted by the Police Minister, they laughed out the incident and dispersed.

Yet another illustration of his good sense of humour was an incident that occurred at the railway station in Agra soon after Lal Bahadur was appointed Police Minister. That was his first visit to that city after his appointment to the post. So there was a goodly assembly of local citizens and officials at the station to receive Lal Bahadur.

When the train arrived, however, the compartment in which Lal Bahadur was travelling went past the group waiting for him with garlands. Lal Bahadur quietly alighted from the train and made his way to the third class exit gate. An officious constable stopped him, shouting at him that he

could not go out until the Minister had left the station.

Someone then whispered into the ear of the constable that he had stopped the Police Minister himself. The constable laughed at the idea, with the remark: "Jao, jao. This little man can't be our Police Minister." Lal Bahadur of course saw to it that no harm came to the constable on that account.

Lal Bahadur was however not to stay in Lucknow very long. Destiny was beckoning him to New Delhi to play a greater role on the Central and all-India stage.

In the winter of 1950 the annual Congress session was held in Nasik. In the face of Nehru's opposition, Purshottamdas Tandon had been elected President of that session. As a result, Nehru kept out of Tandon's Working Committee. The deadlock was finally resolved when at a subsequent meeting of the A.I.C.C., Tandon submitted his resignation of Presidentship, declaring that he had decided to step down, as Nehru was the 'symbol of the nation'.

In this conflict between two much revered leaders of Uttar Pradesh and the country, Lal Bahadur was torn between two loyalties. Tandon, then president of the Servants of the People Society, was his long associate and guru. On the other hand, Nehru was Lal Bahadur's mentor and hero.

Recalling the unhappy episode, the Prime Minister recalled how distressed he was at the time. "I came all the way from Lucknow to New Delhi to speak to Panditji," he said. "I had three meetings with him, one in the morning, the other in afternoon, and the third at night. We had prolonged talks and I suggested to Panditji that some way should be found out to avoid further widening of the rift. It did have some effect on Panditji. Ultimately, however, Tandonji himself resolved the deadlock by resigning from the Congress Presidentship."

It speaks for the character and integrity of the man, that both leaders, even though distrustful of each other between themselves, should implicitly trust Lal Bahadur and that he should be in the confidence of both, without alienating either. When Nehru took over as Congress President, following Tandon's resignation, the first thing that Nehru did was to ask Lal Bahadur to come to Delhi to take over as General-Secre-

tary of the Congress. Lal Bahadur did not hesitate for a moment in throwing up his ministership in U.P. and go to Delhi.

His transfer to Delhi coincided with the time when the country was preparing for its first general elections after independence. The task of organising the Congress for that great event fell upon Lal Bahadur in his capacity as General Secretary of the Congress.

Here he demonstrated his unrivalled abilities as an organiser and proved a glutton for work. He slogged round the clock, toured the country intensively, addressed Congress workers all over, chalked out election strategy to suit the local requirements of each region, helped State Congress committees to prepare their lists of candidates, and in the process, familiarised himself with the merits and abilities of Congressmen in the field and saw for himself from close quarters the new human material coming into the party since independence.

During this period, Lal Bahadur used to stay at Teen Murti House, Nehru's residence. He used to keep so busy and absorbed in election work all the time that it became the practice at Teen Murti House for the servant to push a thali containing food into his room, so that he could eat whenever he chose. Often, the servant used to find the next morning the thali remaining untouched. A great part of the credit for the landslide victory won by the Congress in those elections must go to Lal Bahadur.

When the new Parliament met, Lal Bahadur was induced to stand for election to the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) and was duly elected and, soon after, appointed Minister for Railways and Transport in the Nehru Cabinet.

By a strange coincidence it happened that Lal Bahadur was again available to organise the Congress campaign in the 1957 elections. He had resigned the Railway Ministership hardly a year earlier, taking constitutional responsibility for the Ariyalur railway disaster, in which 144 persons were killed. Thereupon Nehru immediately got him appointed as chief election organiser for the party.

Thus for the second time in succession, Lal Bahadur was closely associated with preparing the Congress for the gene-

ral elections—a rare experience and privilege, which was bound to stand him in good stead in later years.

Then again, he was also associated with the Congress campaign for the 1962 elections, and he, Nehru and Indira were the *de facto* committee that finally compiled the list of Congress candidates. Indeed, in the latest elections, Lal Bahadur is credited with ensuring that one-third of the Congress candidates on the occasion were fresh blood.

## FINDS HIS METIER

As a Minister, Lal Bahadur has earned reputation as being highly diligent, who does his homework thoroughly and knows all the answers.

According to a colleague of his, Lal Bahadur has evolved a technique of mastering his portfolio. As soon as he takes over a ministry, he locks himself in, pores over the files, mugs up the background on the subject and picks the brains of his officers.

At the end of this concentrated period of gestation, Lal Bahadur is ready to face the question-hour in Parliament, his own Ministry officials and the public, and to offer to give them satisfaction.

The permanent secretariat have always been happy with Lal Bahadur as Minister, because he listens to their viewpoint and advice with patience, and in taking decisions and formulating policy, always seeks to accommodate their viewpoint, and then leaves the administrative officials to themselves without getting into their hair, as many other ministers do.

He entered the Central Cabinet in 1952 with the charge of the vital twin portfolio of Railways and Transport. It was a good beginning. It bespoke the esteem in which he was held by the Prime Minister. In Cabinet ranking, Railways came fifth—after External Affairs, held by the Prime Minister himself, Home, Finance and Commerce and Industry.

Apart from being the largest single undertaking in the country, whether in public or private sector, employing some twelve lakhs of people, the Railways played a vital role in the country's communication system. They were verily the veins and arteries of the country's economy. The Railways

had also an important part to play in fulfilling plan targets and meeting the fast multiplying transport requirements of a growing economy and the accelerated pace of industrialisation.

Lal Bahadur's main task at this juncture was putting the railways firmly back on their rails, after the disorganisation they suffered following Partition. It meant removing the bottlenecks, rapidly expanding and remodelling the rail lines to meet the new needs, and, above all, keeping the wagons moving, whether to rush food supplies from surplus to deficit areas or carry coal to industrial centres.

In this Ministry Lal Bahadur would be best remembered however for what he did to improve the lot of the third class passenger. He first reduced the vast difference in the scale of amenities provided in the first class and in the third class. He abolished the first class altogether, converted the former second into first and reduced the number of classes to three, re-designating them first, second and third. His ultimate aim was to have only two classes, upper and lower, as in many other countries.

He then extended the facility of thali meals from the dining car to third class passengers. He also introduced the system of providing sleeping accommodation and reservation of berths for third class passengers. Third class compartments were provided with ceiling fans. The vestibuled *de luxe* train providing air-conditioned reclining-chair accommodation to third class passengers was his innovation.

All this spoke of Lal Bahadur's concern for the small man and his readiness to put himself out to give him a square deal.

Lal Bahadur paid special attention to research and testing for maintaining the efficiency of the Railways. The Research Section of the Central Standards Office was reorganised into a directorate of research, with headquarters at Lucknow and two sub-centres—one at Chittaranjan for undertaking chemical and metallurgical research, and the other at Lonavla, for dealing with problems connected with buildings, concrete, etc.

He then undertook a review of the existing rate structure in the light of the new demands on the system, generated by the Second Five-Year Plan. He appointed the Ramaswami

Mudaliar Committee for the purpose, whose terms of reference also included an examination of the existing statutory provisions governing the liability of the railways as carriers and the construction, procedure and jurisdiction of the Railway Rates Tribunal. The recommendations of this Committee were subsequently implemented.

Lal Bahadur also set up an Efficiency Bureau in the Railway Board for investigating and eliminating outmoded and costly practices and for evolving suitable techniques for an efficient assessment in diverse fields of railway operation and management. The investigations of this Bureau have been particularly valuable in improving the efficiency of the Railways and gauging their workload.

He then interested himself in administrative reform so as to make the new railway zones functionally efficient. He got the workload of the regrouped railways examined by the Efficiency Bureau. When it was found that the workload on the Eastern Railway was heavy and was likely to increase further with the prospective development of the area under the Second Five-Year Plan, he decided to bifurcate the Eastern Railway into two units. With effect from August 1, 1955, the old Bengal-Nagpur Railway section was constituted into a new unit and named the South-Eastern Railway.

With the prospect of substantial increase in the traffic and the workload following industrialisation, the Railway Minister decided to extend the Divisional pattern of administration, in force already on the Northern and Eastern Railways, to other Railways. This system was extended in stages to Central and other railways. The Secunderabad and Bombay Divisions of the Central Railway were inaugurated in 1955-56. In 1956-57, the Divisional system was introduced on the other sections of the Central Railway as also on the Southern and Western Railways.

Lal Bahadur then took measures to combat the evil of thefts on the railways. He found that a great proportion of the claims for compensation on booked consignments arose on account of organised gang thefts both in running trains and in the yards. He appointed a Security Adviser to the Railway Board to make recommendations for reorganising

the work of the existing Watch & Ward Organisation on Railways.

As a result of the Security Adviser's recommendations, the Watch & Ward Organisation on the Railways was completely re-organised and converted into a statutory force called the Railway Protection Force. The Inspector-General, Railway Protection Force, who is the head of the Statutory Force, is also a Director (Security) on the Railway Board. This Force, working in close collaboration with the State Police, has considerably brought down the incidence of thefts of railway consignments as well as of railway property.

Lal Bahadur was also responsible for setting up the Railway Users' Consultative Committee at the regional or divisional levels, the Zonal Railway Users' Consultative Committee at the headquarters of each railway, and the National Railway Users' Consultative Council at the Centre. These bodies associated the public with the railway service.

In 1954-55, Lal Bahadur approved of the setting up of the Ganga Bridge Project administration for constructing a rail-cum-road bridge across the Ganga at a cost of Rs. 14.62 crores, the cost to be shared by the Railways and the Transport Ministries in the proportion of 60:40. There was at that time no bridge on the river in the Bihar area and this bridge helped to provide uninterrupted communication between North and South Bihar and to replace the slow and cumbersome form of transporting the railway wagons across the river through wagon ferries.

During Lal Bahadur's tenure, the production capacity of the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works was increased from 120 to 200 engines per year. He also took measures to speed up production at the Integral Coach Factory. The first machine in the ICF was installed by Lal Bahadur on January 20, 1955. In addition, he appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of G. B. Kotak, to go into the question and recommend measures for the manufacture of indigenous parts and components.

The disorganisation resulting from partition and the consequent dislocation had led to a plummeting down of efficiency in the railway administration all round, what with replacement of engines, wagons and spare parts failing to

keep pace with the new demands. In such a situation the incidence of rail accidents rose somewhat alarmingly; passenger trains failed to keep to schedule, and securing a speedy turn-round of goods wagons became a major headache.

The series of serious rail accidents was climaxed by the smash near Ariyalur in the South, in November 1956, in which 144 were killed. It had been preceded by another accident, three months earlier, at Mehboobnagar in which 112 died. Lal Bahadur had offered to resign on that occasion, owning responsibility for that disaster. But the Prime Minister had declined to accept his resignation. But following the Ariyalur disaster, Lal Bahadur once again tendered his resignation and now refused to take it back.

Speaking on the debate raised on the Ariyalur accident in the Lok Sabha, at which Lal Bahadur announced his resignation, Nehru paid a glowing tribute to the outgoing Railway Minister, which underlined the Prime Minister's esteem for the man. Nehru said: "I should like to say that it has been not only in the Government, but in the Congress, my good fortune and privilege to have him as a comrade and colleague, and no man can wish for a better comrade and better colleague in any undertaking—a man of highest integrity, loyalty, devoted to ideals, a man of conscience and a man of hard work. We can expect no better. And it is because he is such a man of conscience that he has felt deeply whenever there is any failing in the work entrusted to his charge. ....I have the highest regard for him and I am quite sure that in one capacity or another we shall be comrades in the future and will work together."

Nehru, then, appointed Lal Bahadur chief organiser of the Congress campaign for the 1957 general elections—which proved to be yet another fortuitous turn in his career. This role brought him into intimate contact with the new generation of leadership which was fast wresting office and power from the "old guard" in the States.

At the 1957 elections Lal Bahadur was returned to the Lok Sabha from the Allahabad West constituency and came back into the Central Cabinet first as Minister of Transport and Communications. During his brief tenure in this portfolio, the ship-building yard at Vishakapatnam was started

and the country witnessed an unprecedented general strike of Post and Telegraph employees, which Lal Bahadur settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

A year later, following T. T. Krishnamachari's resignation from the Government, stemming from the Mundra scandal, and with Morarji Desai moving over to Finance, Lal Bahadur was promoted to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

It was about this time, to be precise in October 1959, as he was touring the drought-stricken areas of Allahabad, that Lal Bahadur suffered a mild heart attack.

At this controversial Ministry, Lal Bahadur achieved the unique feat of remaining *persona grata* with the business community, while resolutely pursuing the Nehru Government's industrial policy with its bias in favour of the socialist pattern of society. The tiding over of a major foreign exchange crisis about this time also fell to his lot. His decisions over the Company Law were unpalatable to the business community. But with all that, Lal Bahadur retained their respect as a man of integrity and sincerity.

In the public sector, the most significant development during his tenure was the formation of a Heavy Engineering Corporation, with the help of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. The corporation was responsible for the setting up of a heavy foundry and a forge, a heavy machine-building shop and a mining machinery works. Preliminaries were completed for the establishment of a heavy machinery project at Ranchi, while negotiations were also finalised for the setting up of a raw film factory at Ootacamund, with the assistance of a well-known French firm.

Hindustan Machine Tools, Bangalore, began its expansion programme for doubling its output to 2,000 machines annually. The Nangal Fertilizer factory went into production and the watch factory in the public sector at Bangalore, an Indo-Japanese venture, put on sale its first consignment of low-cost quality watches assembled there. The Heavy Electricals Ltd., at Bhopal, started production of heavy electrical machinery.

A record rise of 14 to 15 per cent in industrial output, exceeding the Plan targets in many fields, was the highlight of the year 1960. Indicative of the rising tempo on the industrial

front was the inflow of a larger number of applications from all over the country for starting new enterprises in diverse new fields. The highest increase in production was recorded in the manufacture of transport equipment, including automobile production.

In 1961, about 400 deals for technical and financial collaboration were approved. New company formations during January-September 1961 alone totalled 1,252. A major step towards dispersing the Plan projects as widely as possible was taken in September 1961 when Government announced the location sites in industrially backward areas for seven heavy industrial projects in the public sector to be taken up during the Third Plan.

Lal Bahadur also prepared a scheme for agro-industrial integration. The combination of industry with agriculture, he concluded, would solve the problem of unemployment in rural areas. He wanted village industries to be converted into small-scale industries over a period of 20 to 30 years. This scheme became the basis of subsequent progress in the field.

Lal Bahadur, however, found his metier at the Home Ministry. During the illness of Pandit Pant, Lal Bahadur acted for him as Home Minister in addition to minding his own portfolio of Commerce and Industry. When Pant died in April 1961, Lal Bahadur was confirmed at the Home Ministry, with Sardar Swaran Singh taking over Commerce and Industry.

Here Lal Bahadur blossomed forth. With characteristic energy he flung himself into the multifarious tasks before him at a Ministry so vast and vital in its jurisdiction and ramifications, which is responsible for law and order as also for the administrative set-up of the entire country.

His genius for untangling political knots and pouring oil over troubled waters now found plenty of scope. Whereas Pandit Pant believed in the Fabian tactics of delaying to conquer and solve a problem, Lal Bahadur was prepared to take the bull by the horns in tackling problems that came under his purview.

The grave language riots in Assam, which began sporadically in April 1960 and reached their climax in May 1961, claimed his first attention. The trouble started with an agita-

tion launched to get Assamese declared as the official language of the State, where Assamese, Bengali and English had all been used for official purpose. The demand for Assamese to be declared the State language was first put forward in 1959 by the Assam Sahitya Sabha. It soon snowballed into a militant campaign directed against Bengalis.

Riots broke out in July 1960 when at least 20 were reported killed and 40,000 Bengalis were driven out of their homes, 32,000 taking refuge in West Bengal. Three villages had been burnt down and 600 Bengali homes set on fire. Nehru who toured the riot-torn area on July 17-19, deplored a "state of affairs where Indians had turned into refugees in their own country."

Students and political parties like the PSP and even Congressmen played a partisan role in the agitation. Officials were accused of taking sides in rioting, and 25 of them were charged with dereliction of duty. The agitation culminated in the passing of the Official Language Act by the State Legislature in October 1960.

Out of Assam's population of 8,700,000, the Bengali-speaking element constituted 1,800,000, and another 1,000,000 were tribals. The 1951 Census showed 55 per cent spoke Assamese and 19 per cent Bengali. The Bengalis, however, alleged that the Census had been manipulated and that 33 per cent of the population was Bengali-speaking.

The States Reorganisation Commission had proposed that a State should be treated as unilingual only where one language group constitutes 70 per cent or more of its entire population, and that where there is a substantial minority, constituting 30 per cent of the population, the State should be recognised as bilingual for administrative purposes.

In May 1961, the riots erupted again. This time, the Bengalis, agitating for the recognition of Bengali as an additional language, clashed with the police. In the demonstrations in Cachar district, where the Bengalis are concentrated, 11 were killed and 77 injured and hundreds were arrested. On July 4, the police opened fire on a demonstrating student mob in Gauhati, killing one student and injuring six. The Army had to be called in.

Lal Bahadur was called upon to tackle this explosive situa-

tion in the very first month of his taking over the Home portfolio. He was deeply shocked by the spectacle of a bloody vendetta staged between two language groups within a state, between two sections of the Indian people.

It underlined the bitterness, hatred and distrust that prevailed between the two communities. The situation was threatening to take an ugly turn, with tension mounting between the two neighbouring States of Assam and West Bengal. Sympathetic and protest hartals were organised in West Bengal, and there were disturbances in the border towns of Bengal.

The Home Minister staked his career on a solution of this problem. On May 31, he flew to Assam and began a series of talks with the two parties involved. He patiently listened to each side and every individual until they had spent themselves up, and in the process evolved what has come to be known as the Shastri formula. This formula was simple and practical. Its main terms were:

(1) The provision of the Official Language Act of 1960 empowering local government bodies in Cachar to substitute Assamese for Bengali as the language of the administration, would be repealed;
(2) The State Government would use English in correspondence with Cachar and Hill districts until it was replaced by Hindi;
(3) At the State-level English would be used exclusively for the present and later would be continued to be used along with Assamese;
(4) The safeguards for linguistic minorities in regard to education and employment, provided in the Constitution and accepted by the Central Government following the States Reorganisation Commission's recommendations, would be fully implemented;
(5) All Acts, Ordinances, Regulations, Orders, etc. would continue to be published in English as well as Assamese.

This meant the use of all three languages—English, Assamese and Bengali; correspondence between the Bengali-dominated Cachar district and Assam Government headquarters would be in English and both Assamese and Bengali would

be permitted to be used in Cachar district offices and schools, but Bengali would inevitably receive preference because it was the language of the local majority.

With that, communal harmony was at last established in Assam and a Cachar representative now sits in the State Cabinet. In the following general elections in 1962 the Congress even improved its majority in the Assam Legislature, which has to be attributed directly to Lal Bahadur's reconciliation efforts.

His handling of the Akali agitation launched by Master Tara Singh in August 1961, showed another and an important facet of his character—that he could be firm and unbending in the face of intimidation and threats. Tara Singh had been spoiling for a fight with the Government for quite some years with his demand for a Punjabi Suba (his idea of a communal Sikh State) and a charge-sheet against Government of alleged discrimination against the Sikh community. Tara Singh started his campaign with a much-publicised fast accompanied by morchas and demonstrations.

Lal Bahadur met the Tara Singh problem with a deft combination of the stick and the carrot. As regards Tara Singh's oft-repeated charges of discrimination against the Sikhs in the public services of the country, the Home Minister readily appointed a commission to investigate them. Thereupon Tara Singh announced a boycott of the commission by the Akalis under the unconvincing plea that Government had gone back upon its assurance that the commission would include Tara Singh's nominee. This charge was, however, totally denied by Nehru.

A high-powered commission comprising the ex-Chief Justice of India S. R. Das, Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar and Mr. M. C. Chagla, came out with the verdict: "On the material before it, no discrimination against the Sikhs in the Punjab has been made out." The Commission also expressed the view that the Sikhs "in and outside the Punjab are an honoured part of the Indian society."

The commission's report thus knocked the bottom out of Tara Singh's charge-sheet.

On the other hand, Tara Singh's intimidatory fast got no quarter from Lal Bahadur. Completely ignored by Govern-

ment, the fast meandered on for 48 days—a record which not even Mahatma Gandhi could attain—and then fizzled out. People had got tired of the stunt. In the meantime, unheeded and neglected, the Akalis got demoralised. A split developed in their ranks. A new faction headed by Sant Fateh Singh challenged Tara Singh's leadership, which had for 14 years enjoyed unchallenged supremacy.

In the process, Lal Bahadur finally and conclusively deflated Tara Singh's constant threat to set the Jamuna on fire if his demand for a Punjabi Suba was not granted. That was the last time one heard the cry seriously raised. In the signal achievement, however, the Kairon Government in Punjab deserved a large share of the credit.

It was the firmness and resourcefulness of Pratap Singh Kairon, the Punjab Chief Minister, in the face of every kind of pressure tactics from the Akalis, that demoralised the agitators. If nothing succeeds like success, nothing fails like failure. Kairon's resolute stand shored up New Delhi's firm posture to the Akali blackmail tactics. In Kairon, Tara Singh had met his Waterloo.

# THE HEALING TOUCH

LAL BAHADUR personifies in himself Dale Carnegie's supreme example of how to make friends and influence people. He not only does not have enemies in the world, but has a knack of capturing the hearts of the people with whom he comes in contact. His friendliness and disarming persuasiveness are infectious, while his capacity to look at a problem from the other man's viewpoint is his *forte*.

Early in his tenure as Home Minister, Lal Bahadur won the confidence of the South by his ready recognition of the Southerners' genuine difficulties in agreeing to the displacement of English in favour of Hindi as the medium of official communication in the Central Government. This gesture, coming as it did from a Northerner, and that from one hailing from the heartland of Hindi chauvinism, won him a lasting and grateful allegiance from the South. That stood him in good stead later when the country had to choose a successor to Nehru.

In September 1962, addressing a South Indian audience at the Fifth All-India Youth Conference in Tirupati, Lal Bahadur had declared:

"Unless Hindi is sufficiently developed and the people of our country have learnt it well, there is no other medium of speaking or, if I may say so, a medium which could be used in the commercial world or the administration, especially between state and state, except English. English is the common language spoken in all the States of our country."

In the April of that year Lal Bahadur piloted through Parliament the Official Languages Bill which provided that English "may" continue to be used, in addition to Hindi, after January 1965, for all official purposes of the Union and for

the transaction of business in Parliament. (January 1965 was the deadline laid down in the Constitution for the switch-over to Hindi).

Thereby, he once for all allayed the fears of the Southerners that they might be put at a disadvantage in the recruitment to the Central Services by an immediate adoption of Hindi in place of English as the official language at the Centre.

With the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's secessionist movement, however, Lal Bahadur was tough. He warned C. Annadorai, the leader of the DMK, and his cohorts that such anti-national activity would never be tolerated by Government. He made good his word when the Government of India initiated legislation to make secessionist activity treason. On May 2, 1963, Law Minister Asoke Sen moved a bill in Parliament that sought to amend Article 19 of the Constitution so as to declare preaching of secession from the Indian Union a treasonable act.

Only the wasting disease that had seized the Congress-PSP Coalition Government in Kerala failed to respond to Lal Bahadur's 'healing touch'. The Shastri formula here represented a reshuffle of portfolios, with education, the bone of contention, taken away from the Praja Socialist Chief Minister Pattom Thanu Pillai and conferred on Congress Deputy Chief Minister R. Sanker, and the institution of a 'brains trust', comprising men from all walks of life, to advise the Government. The serious corruption charges against Ministers were referred to the Prime Minister for a verdict.

The formula was practicable and could have worked had not the malady in Kerala gone too deep for medication and demanded nothing short of drastic surgery. Here was a coalition in which eight ministers were Congressmen and only three Praja Socialists, and yet the Chief Minister was a Praja Socialist. In such a situation, the tail sought to wag the dog, and when the dog resisted it, there was friction and conflict.

When the Congress Ministers insisted that on all important matters the Chief Minister must consult the Congressite Deputy Chief Minister, the former contended that he could

not share or give up his constitutional powers so long as he remained Chief Minister.

Later, compromises were arrived at on this and other matters in dispute, but were frustrated by distrust and internecine cold war. Thereupon the Gordian Knot of the problem was cut by kicking Chief Minister Thanu Pillai upstairs as Governor of Punjab and making his Congress deputy, R. Sanker, the Chief Minister.

Lal Bahadur then turned to Bombay and resolved the impasse that had arisen in the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee, following the conflict between S. K. Patil and Krishna Menon that stemmed from the days of the general elections in Bombay in 1962.

Amid all these calls on his attention, the Home Minister also found time to give for administrative reform, calculated to hack down red-tape and to reduce corruption and inefficiency. A Central Bureau of Investigation was set up, and the Santhanam Commission was appointed to investigate and recommend measures to stamp out corruption in the country's administrative and public life. He then established an all-India Board to promote the social and economic well-being of the most backward classes of India under the Home Ministry.

The Home Minister put his heart and soul in the task of devising measures to promote and consolidate national integration in the country. A National Integration Conference of all parties was convened in New Delhi from September 28 to October 1, 1961, with the Prime Minister in the chair, to consider the problem which appeared to be crying for the attention of the Government and the people.

Fissiparous tendencies seemed to be once again manifesting themselves in the country. Regional, linguistic and communal tensions were growing all around. The conference approved a code of conduct for political parties. This code enjoined upon the political parties to refrain from aggravating differences and tensions, from inciting people to violence and from resorting to agitations likely to disturb the peace and create bitterness.

The conference also adopted a statement dealing with the role of education in promoting national integration and the

problem of language in relation to education. The conference recognised that Hindi must ultimately develop as the link language, and also that English must continue as the inter-state medium until Hindi developed adequately to play that role effectively.

The conference generally accepted the three-language formula, and it was agreed that in Hindi areas another modern Indian language, preferably a Southern language, should be taught.

The conference set up a permanent National Integration Council and appointed three committees—the Sampurnanand Committee to go into the question of the medium of instruction for university education; the Asoka Mehta Committee to define communalism, and the C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar Committee to recommend measures to combat regional separatism.

On August 27, 1962, presiding over the second meeting of the committee of zonal councils for national integration (comprising chief ministers of States), Lal Bahadur claimed that "definite progress" had been made in the implementation of the safeguards for linguistic and other minorities.

The National Integration Council, however, automatically suspended its functioning following the Chinese invasion of the country, in October 1962. The invasion roused an unprecedented upsurge of national and patriotic sentiment among the people and witnessed a unique demonstration of political unity and solidarity in the country.

The Ramaswamy Aiyar Committee adjourned *sine die* with the comment: "Out of the evil of Chinese aggression has come the unmistakable manifestation of the Indian people's deep-rooted attachment to the country and integrity of their motherland. The danger from across our borders has instinctively drawn the fervently patriotic citizens of this country to one another and made their age-old attributes of courage and sacrifice assert themselves."

The committee, however, recommended amendment of Article 19 of the Constitution to make secessionist activity treasonable.

The Asoka Mehta Committee on Communalism also adjourned with the observation that the developments in the

country following the Chinese aggression "have proved that we are a nation." The Committee's report added: "the emergency . . . had enabled the people to purge themselves overnight of all narrow loyalties . . . where once the mood was one of frustration and of local and limited loyalties, today it has miraculously changed into one of enthusiastic, even dedicated, participation in the mighty endeavour the nation as a whole has been called upon to make in the face of the brutal aggression menacing our freedom."

The Chinese act of perfidy and our state of hopeless unpreparedness to meet the danger came as a shock to the nation. In its indignation the nation turned on the man responsible for the defence of the country and demanded his head on a charger. Thus a major casualty of the Chinese aggression was Krishna Menon who had to resign under the pressure of public opinion. Nehru who had till then steadfastly defended Menon against attack from every direction, could no more resist the public outcry and accepted Menon's resignation as Defence Minister.

On October 26, 1962, the President proclaimed a state of emergency in the country and the draconian Defence of India Act was resurrected from the archives of the Second World War. Under the emergency powers the Government could issue ordinances and regulations unhampered by the Fundamental Rights.

In fact it could exercise powers to regulate virtually all aspects of the country's life. It could requisition property, services and transport, ban political parties, detain an individual, place curbs on the press and control prices. A National Defence Council and a Citizens' Central Council were formed to mobilise war effort at the official and non-official level.

As Home Minister, it fell to Lal Bahadur's lot to administer the national emergency. By December 1, the Chinese stopped fighting and withdrew towards the border. But the emergency had to remain in force. The Government and the people desired that it should continue.

There is a soul of goodness even in things evil. Two great benefits had accrued from the Chinese perfidy—national unity and the patriotic fervour roused by it. Every Indian was anxious that those gifts should not be dissipated away.

Nor had the threat to the country's security and integrity in the least diminished. The Chinese forces were firmly entrenched on the other side of the border, poised for a strike any moment.

So the state of national emergency was retained long after the Chinese invasion had ceased. It meant that a war effort had to be maintained on an emergency footing even when there was no war. For the administrators this was a difficult situation. In handling it, Lal Bahadur displayed great imagination and tact.

He was firm where necessary, but generally circumspect and liberal in the application of the Defence of India Rules. The freedom of expression, so far as the press and political parties were concerned, remained uncurtailed except in a very few blatant cases where an anti-national and pro-Chinese line was advocated. A number of pro-Peking Communists were however rounded up and kept out of harm's way.

On February 3, 1963, Lal Bahadur found time to visit the Andamans, the first Home Minister to visit this far flung Indian island territory in the Bay of Bengal.

Lal Bahadur added a diplomatic feather in his cap when he made a trip to Nepal in March 1963. This was a moment when Indo-Nepalese relations were strained. Kathmandu appeared to be getting closer to Peking and Rawalpindi. Hostility and spite towards India were writ large in the columns of Nepali press and in Nepali leaders' pronouncements. The Home Minister's visit to Kathmandu was initially greeted with distrust by that country's press. But once he arrived in the Nepali capital, his disarming charm won over everyone.

Lal Bahadur had three meetings with King Mahendra as also with Tulsi Giri, Chairman of the National Council of Ministers, and Vishwabandhu Thapa, Home Minister. The talks were carried on in an atmosphere of cordiality and much mutual esteem. Lal Bahadur himself described the parleys as "very useful and fruitful." Tulsi Giri summed them up as an "earnest attempt being made by both sides to remove all misunderstandings." It was stated that all issues that caused 'irritation' had been discussed.

At the conclusion of the talks, on March 5, Lal Bahadur

held a news conference at which he said he was "optimistic about further improvement" in the relations between the two countries. He also stressed the need for greater economic collaboration between India and Nepal.

When a Nepali journalist asked whether some misunderstandings still existed, Lal Bahadur remarked, "The less said about them the better. It is better not to repeat them when the two countries were in a process of removing them." He then appealed to the press of Nepal and India to help the two countries to come closer.

Asked whether Nepal was unduly inclined towards China, Lal Bahadur replied he had no opinion in the matter. "It is entirely for Nepal to decide its policy and course of action," he added.

Lal Bahadur's every word and gesture during the trip breathed sympathy and consideration for Nepal's susceptibilities as an independent sovereign power.

Referring to India-aided projects in Nepal like the Trisuli Hydel scheme, the Home Minister observed that what India was doing should not be considered as help but as a co-operative venture to "help in the growth of a sister country for which economic progress is a 'must'. I consider economic development should be given the highest priority."

A joint communique issued on the occasion stressed the "unbreakable ties of geography, culture and traditions" between India and Nepal. The discussions covered "several matters of common interest in the context of the conditions prevailing in the region and of the general world situation." It affirmed that in view of the basic unity and friendship between the two countries small differences would be settled by frank discussions.

The communique then added, "The Home Minister emphasized that India and Nepal were sovereign countries and India had no wish other than to have friendliest relations with a neighbour country with whom she had so many ties."

This last sentiment which Lal Bahadur went out of his way to put on record in the communique would appear to be the crux of the problem of the Indo-Nepali relations.

Much of the misunderstandings against India in Kathmandu stemmed from the latter's complex that New Delhi

was trying to dominate Nepal, that India failed to respect the sovereignty of its small neighbour. With these fears allayed, all mistrust towards India was bound to be dissipitated.

Dispelling these fears was Lal Bahadur's greatest achievement during his four-day Kathmandu trip. Once that invisible barrier standing between the two was removed, the two traditionally friendly neighbours reverted to their normal, cordial relations.

Then came the Kamaraj Plan, in August 1963, and Lal Bahadur along with five of his colleagues in the Central Cabinet, handed in his resignation to the Prime Minister and offered to devote himself to party and organisational work, in the spirit of the Kamaraj Plan.

Top leadership in the Congress had for some time been concerned over the deterioration in the organisational side of the party. This deterioration was attributed to the fact that the best talents in the party converged on ministerial office, leaving second-raters to run the organisation wing. That had, on the one hand, led to a lowering of discipline and, on the other, to an unseemly scramble for power. The prevailing factional conflicts in the party at the state level sprang from it.

Another grave drawback noted in the present-day Congress leadership was its isolation from and loss of contact with the common people. The Kamaraj Plan was designed to remedy that state of affairs, by getting senior leaders in ministerial office to resign and devote themselves wholetime to organisational work and mass contact and spread the Congress message, ideology and policies among the people.

At a public meeting in Patna, some months later, Biju Patnaik, the boss of Orissa Congress, explained the origin of this plan. He said the plan was born in June 1963, when the Chief Ministers and Pradesh Congress Chiefs of Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar and the then Congress President, D. Sanjivayya, met in Ranchi to discuss the merger of the Jarkhand Party into the Congress in Bihar.

Patnaik said : "When we met at Ranchi we gave our thoughts to the problem of revitalising the organisation. We were anxious to halt the growing tendency among Congress-

men to get themselves deeply entrenched in power. We decided that some of us should step down and we informed the Prime Minister about our plan." Nehru approved of the idea, and later, according to Patnaik, Kamaraj and others were contacted and the plan took a definite shape.

Under the Kamaraj Plan, all Chief Ministers and senior ministers at the Centre and in the States had tendered their resignations to the Prime Minister. Mr. Nehru accepted twelve of them, including six from Central Ministers.

It is stated that Lal Bahadur was not in Nehru's original list but he insisted on going out with other 'Kamarajed' comrades. It is believed that Nehru considered him indispensable in the Cabinet and could not spare him, but had reluctantly to yield to Lal Bahadur's importunities.

In his presidential address at Bhubaneshwar, Kamaraj himself explained the plan named after him in these words: "During the days of the freedom struggle the Congress organisation had the benefit of the devoted services of all its leaders. But after achieving independence it became necessary for Congressmen to undertake the responsibility of carrying on the Government both at the Centre and in the States. No doubt this has helped to put the country on a firm and solid foundation. But it had the result of depriving the organisation of the services of some of the senior Congressmen."

The remedy prescribed by the Congress President for this state of affairs was: "The leaders of the Congress organisation should periodically exchange positions in the administration with those in the organisation. If Congressmen voluntarily accept this free interchange of personnel between the organisation and the administration, the tendency to form groups in the organisational as well as the legislative wings will be greatly reduced".

Kamaraj then acknowledged the "very fine response" which Congressmen gave to the decision of the All-India Congress Committee to withdraw senior leaders from ministerial positions. He added, "It has demonstrated that the spirit of sacrifice which animated Congressmen in the days of the struggle still permeates them and that at any moment Congressmen would be ready to sacrifice position or power if the

country needed it."

Subsequent events have however challenged the Congress President's optimism in regard to the impact of the Kamaraj Plan on Congressmen. In the first place, it could not be truthfully claimed that those senior Congressmen who resigned from Government have devoted their time to build up the organisational wing. Indeed, as a result, they now find plenty of energy and time to spare for playing factional politics within Pradesh Congress.

Nor could it be honestly claimed that the High Command has made any serious attempt to utilise the services of 'Kamarajed' Congressmen for either re-invigorating the organisational side of the party or for bringing the party closer to the masses, which was also claimed to be the objective of the Kamaraj Plan.

In the States, in most cases when a Chief Minister retired, he saw to it that his own nominee succeeded him and thus retained his grip on the state administration. In Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, two hotbeds of factional intrigue, as also in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Bihar, group politics were as rampant as ever. Thus the major achievement of the Kamaraj Plan would appear to be to jettison Morarji Desai and Jagjiwan Ram from the Central Cabinet.

# AFTER BHUBANESHWAR

NEHRU'S grave illness cast its shadow over the 68th session of the Indian National Congress held at Bhubaneshwar on January 7-10. Much was expected of this session. Presided over by a strong man and a man of the masses, the session was to establish the Congress party's socialist credentials and accelerate the pace of socialism in the country and categorically commit the party to it.

For the first time for as long as one could remember, a Congress session was now being held without the familiar and dominant figure of Jawaharlal Nehru on the dais to guide the proceedings. To miss Nehru on the platform was a grave enough void to make the audience distraught. But what was more stunning to them was the realisation that even Nehru was mortal and could fall seriously ill, and that soon they might have to do without him.

As the report of the 'stroke' that Nehru had suffered on January 7, percolated to Congressmen attending the Subjects Committee meeting, they were for the first time compelled to give a serious thought to the question: After Nehru who?

And the anxious eyes of the Congressmen assembled in Gopabandhunagar scanned around searching for the one who could carry the mantle of Nehru. Would it be Morarji Desai? Or Lal Bahadur Shastri? Or Indira Gandhi? And as they looked for signs, they found that it was the dimunitive figure of Lal Bahadur that seemed to fill the bill.

It was Lal Bahadur who broke the news to the Subjects Committee meeting on January 7 about Nehru's serious indisposition. He told a hushed audience: "Panditji has not come to the meeting of the Subjects Committee. The Congress President has therefore asked me to inform you about Panditji's health."

He then read out the following bulletin: "The Prime Minister has been under great strain for some weeks as a result of which his blood pressure has shown a tendency to be high. This morning he felt very tired and weak. It was therefore decided to send for the doctors who have been attending on him in Delhi. They have examined him and are hopeful of a quick recovery within a short time. They have however advised him complete rest and cancellation of all engagements for the present."

Lal Bahadur then said: "I might also add Panditji is anxious to come here, but we all have requested him not to do so."

Then the Congress rank and file also noted that the honour and responsibility of moving the most important resolution before the Subjects Committee of the session—on Democracy and Socialism—fell upon not Gulzarilal Nanda, a professed socialist and No. 2 in the Cabinet, nor on Morarji Desai, a leader next only to Nehru in national stature, but on Lal Bahadur who had ceased to be a minister five months earlier and whose very claim to be a socialist was questioned by leftists like Krishna Menon and Keshav Dev Malaviya.

Two weeks later, these signs were further reinforced when Lal Bahadur was recalled to the Cabinet and appointed Minister without Portfolio and most of Nehru's duties were assigned to him.

Even as Nehru arrived in Bhubaneshwar on the after-noon of January 6 from Tikerpara by helicopter, he looked pale and exhausted. Four persons, including Biju Patnaik, helped him as he alighted from the plane. With difficulty he took the salute at a guard of honour presented by an NCC contingent at the airport.

His face somewhat brightened only when he came upon a happy group of children who had come to the airport to greet and cheer him. He then attended the flag-hoisting ceremony, looking extremely tired. In spite of it, he took part in a three-hour meeting of the Steering Committee later in the evening which finalised the resolution on the international situation. The next morning he was struck down by a 'stroke'.

Lal Bahadur piloted the controversial 3,000 word resolution

on Democracy and Socialism with great skill and tact. He spoke in authoritative and authentic tones, as the vast audience listened to him with rapt attention and respect. He told Congressmen, "Democratic socialism is the only way through which the country could march towards progress and prosperity, without sacrificing the dignity of the individual." He made no bones about the importance the Congress attached to the public sector, and said, "The public sector would have to grow, as the private sector is incapable of delivering the goods."

He declared, "Life's logic is neither logic nor magic alone," and warned the leftists, "Idealism alone could not achieve results. Idealism has to be tempered with realism so that the party did not lose its moorings and could carry the masses with it." Then he told the zealots of state trading: "We should be very careful in resorting to state trading, particularly in foodgrains. Until the Government is ready to cope with the enormity of the problem, state trading would not only increase corruption but might add to the difficulties of the people."

He met the criticism from both the left and the right with deftness, while sticking to a highly pragmatic approach. He was against a dogmatic and doctrinaire attitude to nationalisation. But he thoroughly approved of a take-over of rice and flour mills. To Lal Bahadur socialism appeared to be no more than a means to an end, the end being improving the lot of the masses.

Presiding over the 68th plenary seesion of the Congress, Kamaraj, whose passion for social justice was beyond doubt, showed himself as equally pragmatic in his ideas. His presidential address was hard-headed and dealt with concrete problems faced by the common people.

He suggested a commission on the British pattern to keep a check on monopolies, a ministry for the development of the backward areas, free education upto the secondary stage, pensions for the old and the infirm, and a reajustment of taxation and other policies to reduce economic disparities. He looked forward to a socialistic society in India without class conflict.

He then appealed to all those who had faith in democracy

and socialism to join the Congress. This particular part of the appeal was directed at those who had left the party under the belief that the party would fail to take a definite stand in favour of socialism. He, however, assured the private sector that Congress policies were not directed against it.

The lengthy resolution on 'Democracy and Socialism, which had been drafted by a special sub-committee of the Congress High Command, gave the highest priority to assuring as speedily as possible a national minimum in the essential requirements of food, clothing, housing, education and health, and laid stress on reducing the "vast disparities in income and wealth which exist now."

The debate on the resolution lasted three days and seventy speakers participated. While the rightists thought the resolution went too far, the leftists described it as vague and pressed for certain definite steps, such as nationalisation of banks, as concrete evidence.

The other important resolution related to an amendment of the Congress constitution so as to re-define the party's object as "the establishment in India, by peaceful and constitutional means, of a socialist state based on parliamentary democracy". Curiously enough, S. K. Patil, generally labelled by the leftists as the high priest of rightism in the country, moved this resolution.

Nehru himself could not attend any of the meetings of the Congress at Bhubaneshwar, being confined to bed throughout that time. Through sheer will power however he made a dogged recovery, so much so that he was back at his desk within five weeks of the stroke.

On January 22, Lal Bahadur's appointment as Minister without Portfolio was announced. A communique from Rashtrapati Bhavan stated that the Minister without Portfolio would "carry out functions entrusted to him by the Prime Minister in relation to the Ministry of External Affairs and the Departments of the Cabinet Secretariat and Atomic Energy."

According to the directive issued by the Prime Minister under the Presidential Order, "the Minister without Portfolio sees and deals with the papers that come to the Prime

Minister from the Ministry of External Affairs, the Department of Atomic Energy and the Cabinet Secretariat. He obtains the Prime Minister's specific orders whenever necessary."

Almost the first task that Lal Bahadur was called upon to address himself to on taking over was the explosive situation developing in Srinagar over the theft of a sacred relic—the Prophet's hair—from the Hazratbal Mosque in Srinagar. The relic was stolen on December 26, 1963.

All discontented and disgruntled elements in Srinagar—anti-Bakshi, pro-Sheikh and pro-Pakistani—took advantage of the crisis to rally together into an 'Action Committee' and whip up a political agitation whose triple objective was (1) to bring down the current Bakshi regime, titularly headed by Shamsuddin, Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed's nominee; (2) agitate for Sheikh Abdullah's release; and (3) to enforce the plebiscite demand.

Thanks to the energetic efforts of the Union Home Ministry and the Central Bureau of Intelligence, the sacred relic was restored on January 4, hardly eight days after it was reported stolen. V. Vishwanathan, Union Home Secretary, who was personally present in Srinagar and directed the investigations, stated to the press that the relic had been surreptitiously placed back in the mosque by the culprits amid hot pursuit by CBI men.

The Home Secretary claimed that almost all the witnesses in a position to testify to its genuineness, had identified the sacred hair and he promised a trial of the culprits as soon as the investigations were completed.

But the Action Committee was not satisfied with the statement and launched an agitation for a public identification of the sacred relic by persons nominated by the Action Committee. The local Government as well as New Delhi, however, shied at such a proposition lest it should be made by the Committee an excuse for adding fuel to the fire.

Such was the situation when Lal Bahadur came upon the scene. Before leaving for Srinagar, the Minister without Portfolio had a long meeting with Nehru and received from him a mandate to clean up the mess in Srinagar and install a broad-based government in the State. The Prime Minister

gave him a free hand to tackle the political and administrative problems of Kashmir.

The Minister without Portfolio arrived in Srinagar on January 30 and took the bull by the horns. He started direct talks with representatives of the Action Committee, and in no time won over the moderate and more responsible elements on that Committee.

He held intimate and friendly parleys with Maulana Mohmad Saeed Masoodi, a sober, responsible and highly respected leader and a prominent member of the Action Committee. He then firmly over-ruled the Home Secretary's decision to the contrary and announced that a special 'deedar', an exposition, of the recovered sacred relic, would be held on February 3. He suggested a compromise by agreeing to include representatives of the Action Committee on the panel of maulvis charged with the task of inspecting the relic.

The special 'deedar' was duly held on the announced date and seventeen maulvis and pirs examined the relic and certified it as genuine. The hour-long ceremony was marked by scenes of joy and Lal Bahadur himself was present at the function.

In the event, Lal Bahadur's courage and instinct proved right, and the civilian Vishwanathan's fears entirely misplaced. Lal Bahadur in winning the gamble had also won the hearts of the opposition.

Thus a situation that was boiling up for more than four weeks and threatening to blow up, cooled down and the controversy was settled to the satisfaction of everyone concerned. The episode ended in all-round amity and in the restoration of popular confidence in the Union Government.

In the process, Lal Bahadur personally won the esteem and friendship of the Kashmiris. Members of the opposition Action Committee were among the first to thank and congratulate him for resolving a grave crisis so amicably and tactfully.

In Delhi the Executive of the Congress Parliamentary Party passed a resolution recording its appreciation of the efficient way in which Lal Bahadur had handled the delicate situation in Kashmir.

Lal Bahadur now concentrated on the next step. After listening on every side with his characteristic patience, his

analytical mind came to the conclusion that the Shamsuddin Government, which he found thoroughly unpopular and ineffective, must go and the contaminating Bakshi influence should be completely eliminated from the State's administration.

Having come to that conclusion, he went forth systematically and firmly to achieve the objective. At first he encountered obstructive tactics from Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed and Shamsuddin. But after he had held parleys with them for a couple of days, Shamsuddin appeared to be ready to eat out of Lal Bahadur's hand, while Bakshi went all out loudly to offer his co-operation to the Union Minister without Portfolio in his efforts to bring peace and normalcy to Srinagar and stability to the State's Government.

On February 27, Shamsuddin announced to a meeting of the National Conference Legislature Party his decision to resign from the Prime Ministership of the State "in deference to the wishes of Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed". The next day, G. M. Sadiq was elected leader of the party, with Bakshi himself proposing his name.

Releasing Bakshi's grip on the affairs of Kashmir was a consummation long devoutly wished for by many in New Delhi. But even Nehru did not find the gumption to set about it. And thus Bakshi ruled in Srinagar like an absolute despot, his right none to dispute and his misrule none to question. Now this little man from New Delhi had done the trick with the ease of a David felling a Goliath.

Lal Bahadur's third conclusion on the Kashmir situation was that Sheikh Mohamed Abdullah could no longer be kept behind bars without producing a political explosion, apart from the 'stink' his long detention was raising for India in the international arena.

In this view Nehru immediately agreed with Lal Bahadur. Nehru had for long been uneasy in mind about keeping his friend, the Sheikh Saheb, in detention, and was glad to get an opportunity to end it. The State Prime Minister, Sadiq, readily concurred with the proposition. Sadiq was thereupon authorised to release the Sheikh at a time and date convenient to his Government.

Justifying the decision, Lal Bahadur subsequently stated

in Parliament: "A time and stage had been reached when some step or other had to be taken." He declared, "I wouldn't want to keep Kashmir if it meant keeping one man in prison. The real test lay in releasing him and retaining Kashmir."

Sheikh Abdullah was released on April 8, and was duly lionised all round, with the full blessings of New Delhi and approval of the Sadiq Government. No sooner the Sheikh came out, he reiterated the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, challenged New Delhi's contention about the finality of the State's accession to India, and insisted that there were three parties to the dispute—India, Pakistan and Kashmir. It was a triple repudiation of the Government of India's stand on the Kashmir question.

Nehru had described it as a 'calculated risk'. Lal Bahadur defended it as a 'correct' step, but admitted that the Government didn't think that the Sheikh would "reiterate his old stand so unequivocally so soon after coming out." He added, Government was hoping to bring the Sheikh round to its viewpoint once he came to New Delhi for discussions with Nehru, a hope which many considered somewhat naïve, in the light of the Sher-e-Kashmir's bellicose pronouncements immediately following his release.

But strangely enough, after the first flush, at the end of a week or ten days, the Sheikh gradually sobered down in his pronouncements, as he took on the altruistic and nobler role of building a bridge of goodwill between India and Pakistan.

The Sadiq Government gave him full freedom to talk his head off, while in New Delhi, Nehru, Lal Bahadur, Nanda and T. T. Krishnamachari reaffirmed India's stand that Kashmir's accession was final and complete and counselled patience to the public over the Sheikh's provocative pronouncements, and mildly warned the Sheikh himself not to go off the deep end in his speeches.

History has yet to deliver its judgment on the bold step taken by New Delhi and Srinagar in letting lose the 'Lion of Kashmir, in the Valley of Kashmir. It was not clear how the Central Government could reconcile its insistence that Kashmir's accession is irrevocable with its action of releasing the Sheikh who has openly challenged that claim.

For the Sheikh has made no secret of his ancient ambition to carve out an independent Kashmir, whatever the price—with the approval and guarantee of India and Pakistan, and of the U.N., if possible; without, if necessary. On the other hand, New Delhi has set its face against any such proposal.

It could however be claimed on behalf of the Government that they had thereby successfully de-fused a situation that was mounting up to a blow-up, shaken the Kashmir question out of the rut into which it had got stuck so long, and imparted dynamism to India's policy. It must be conceded that the step at least had the merit of promising a break-through out of a problem hitherto hopelessly deadlocked, whatever the end result might prove to be.

Nehru's sudden death however gave a setback to this process, breaking the momentum of Sheikh Abdullah's self-proclaimed labours to bring India and Pakistan closer together and get them to negotiate a mutually satisfactory settlement of the Kashmir question—though one cannot help wondering whether if he had succeeded in getting the two countries to negotiate, the outcome could have been different from what it had been in the past seventeen years of effort.

Indeed, when Nehru died, the Sheikh was still in Pakistan, just embarked on a tour of 'Azad' Kashmir territory, and he cancelled the rest of his itinerary to rush back to New Delhi.

In the meantime, Lal Bahadur's first major foreign policy statement as Minister without Portfolio in the Lok Sabha on February 19, pleading against rigid and fixed attitudes in international affairs, came as a fresh breath of air and set all India by the ear.

Intervening in the debate on the Vice-President's address to Parliament, Lal Bahadur referred to India's disputes with China and Pakistan and declared: "The door for discussions and negotiations should never be closed," though, he added, no one in the country "could conceive of any kind of negotiations which were not in keeping with national honour and dignity." He then reiterated that "in human affairs one could not take a rigid view and no question could be kept pending for long."

The press and the politicians dissected the statement, and

according to their individual predilections, hailed or criticised it, but it did succeed in setting their minds on a new track. Some within the Central Cabinet and many in the party and in the Opposition, however, raised a hue and cry against the statement until Lal Bahadur was compelled to tone it down and even repudiate the impression created by it on the public mind.

But all the same, that speech gave an inkling into the working of Lal Bahadur's mind in relation to Pakistan as well as China. It was clear he was not in favour of surrender, nor was he prepared to resile from the fundamental position taken up by India. But it also indicated that he was against a rigidity of approach to those problems and favoured keeping the door open for peaceful negotiations since, as he pointed out, the only other alternative was war.

# THE MIGHTIEST IMPACT

ACCORDING to Lal Bahadur himself, among all the personalities of the time, Mahatma Gandhi had the greatest impact on him. "My political life was moulded by Gandhiji's teachings and I was deeply impressed by his way of life," the Prime Minister says.

Indeed, no sooner did the teen-age Lal Bahadur come under Gandhiji's spell than he set out to model himself after him. Actually, for a year or so, Lal Bahadur refused to wear shoes, and even during the burning hot summer months of Northern India, he walked the streets with bare feet.

Lal Bahadur recalls, "Gandhiji's adherence and propagation of the principles of truth and non-violence had very great effect on me. The more I grew in age and experience, the greater I felt the need for those principles for the salvation of the world." He admits that he did realise that Gandhiji's teachings and preachings were not always practical, and yet his moral personality was irresistible. "By his own example he created in me the desire to rise purely on merit and good works," he added.

It is to Gandhiji that we have to trace the Prime Minister's 'Sermon on the Mount' approach to life, his simplicity of living and directness of mind, his mental detachment and a complete lack of illwill. With him humility is no pose but a way of life. Yet he is a pragmatist and realist enough to insist upon a strong, modern defence set-up for his country.

Next only to Gandhiji, Nehru influenced his mind and politics the most. "From the very beginning, Panditji was exceedingly good and kind to me," says Lal Bahadur. "What I liked most about him was that he never involved himself in power politics." He added, "I learnt from him and Gandhiji that one

should not run after power or office, but work quietly and with detachment, without expecting reward. And I have learnt from my own experience that this greatly helps in one's political career and brings recognition of merit, provided one has the patience to wait and work with devotion and dedication."

Lal Bahadur refutes, with the mild heat he is capable of, the suggestion that he was Nehru's yes-man and that he never had a mind of his own. A stock joke among his traducers is a story which runs thus: When Nehru fell ill at Bhubaneshwar, doctors needed volunteers to donate blood for transfusion to Nehru. When Lal Bahadur was asked to volunteer, he instinctively responded: "I will have to ask Panditji about it!"

But Lal Bahadur's insistence that he has often given unpalatable advice to Nehru, that a discussion between the two was not just a one-way affair and that Lal Bahadur made valuable contribution to the solution of knotty problems, is borne out by evidence available from other sources.

As early as 1962, when Nehru discussed with him the tentative composition of the new Cabinet and distribution of portfolios, Lal Bahadur had offered him a list in which, prompted by the man's unpopularity, he had named Krishna Menon Minister for Defence Production instead of Defence—a proposal actually adopted later during the Chinese invasion crisis, when Nehru, again at the instance of Lal Bahadur, named Menon for Defence Production for 9 days, before the latter was pushed out of the Cabinet completely on November 9, 1962.

At a time when it was heresy to suggest the ouster of Pratap Singh Kairon in Punjab, Lal Bahadur strongly advocated action against the Punjab leader. Similarly, Lal Bahadur as Home Minister did not hesitate to initiate action against Keshav Dev Malaviya in the Sirajuddin affair. He was equally firm in insisting on ridding Kashmir of Bakshi.

Lal Bahadur confessed he had always a high admiration for Nehru. "It is true that I had full faith in him," he said. "Even when I felt that he was not one-hundred per cent right, I thought I should accept his word as I had great faith in his objective and disinterested approach."

While Lal Bahadur always proved a loyal disciple and a faithful follower, his critical, detached, almost clinical, approach in his assessment of his seniors, however, made it difficult for him to accept anyone as his beau ideal.

Thus he freely acknowledges his political debt to Pandit Pant, whom he revered as an elder. But he is honest enough to confess that the 'Tiger of Kumaon' was far from his model —he disapproved of his political techniques and traditionalism.

Equally, he differed from Tandon, his much respected guru in the Servants of the People Society, in the latter's pro-Hindu bias in politics.

Lal Bahadur is also sensitive to any suggestion that as Prime Minister he is not independent or strong enough to assert himself. Indeed this complex seems to be driving him to the other extreme, inviting the charge from some of his colleagues that he is too aloof and does not consult them even on matters in which they were concerned. Yet the same charge of aloofness could have been levelled against Nehru, and was actually made against Attlee and Ramsay Macdonald and many another Prime Minister in the world.

At one of my interviews, I frankly put to Lal Bahadur the question whether the current system of 'collective leadership,' further allegedly shackled by external advice from the Kamaraj caucus, did not hamper his initiative as Prime Minister.

His reply was: "I would not like to praise myself, but I do take my own decisions. However, it is true that I want to have as much consultation as possible with all shades of opinion before coming to a decision. I always like to respect the views and opinions of others, and if they are right, I don't hesitate to accept them."

"But it is absolutely wrong to suggest that there is any interference in my work from any quarter," the Prime Minister asserted. "Unfortunately, the impression has gone round through some of the press correspondents that I was under the influence of some of the Congress leaders. I can say without any fear of contradiction, or without any disrespect to any of my colleagues, that I have not consulted a single person in so far as the formation of my cabinet was con-

cerned. Even additions and alterations were made on my own."

"In the matter of appointment of ministers of my government I have been secretive," he added. "With apologies to my colleagues, I want to keep this to myself in future also, if and when the occasion arises. It is but natural that I should take the whole responsibility for this on my own shoulders."

Lal Bahadur said that when he appointed Sardar Swaran Singh as Foreign Minister he did it entirely on his own, and had consulted none of his colleagues in the Cabinet nor the Congress President and his causus. Actually, I ascertained from other sources, Kamaraj knew about the appointment some four hours after it had been announced in New Delhi.

Lal Bahadur's Cabinet colleagues and the Central Secretariat have however to get used to his style of understatement, and to learn, for example, that when he says, "I think this is what should be done in the case," he is not just expressing an opinion but giving his decision.

Asked to define his concept of socialism, the Prime Minister explained: "India needs socialism in action. What we do for our masses to make them self-sufficient in regard to their food, clothing, shelter, medical aid and employment is the important thing. The more we can do to bring these to the people, the nearer would we be to the goal of socialism. The wide gap between the poor and the rich has to be removed. The standard of living of the common man must be raised. It is in this context that the Bhubaneshwar resolution has to be viewed and suitable measures taken." It is this pragmatism in Lal Bahadur's approach, whose accent is on social justice rather than dogmatic socialism, that is distrusted by the leftists in the Congress and outside.

Lal Bahadur's own life is an illustration of the Gandhian principles translated into practice. Today, as the Prime Minister of India, his mode of living has not changed by an iota. He likes to quote Gandhiji's saying: "In office always sit light, never tight." If Lal Bahadur tomorrow has to give up office, he would have the least difficulty in adjusting back to a modest life of limited means.

With his meekness, modesty and simplicity, Lal Bahadur has come to be looked upon by the masses as one of them. In the seat of power he represents the underdog and the have-nots of the country, to whom they could safely entrust their fate. He, like them, lives, eats and dresses simply—he has never worn the churidars and achkan.

In July 1964, when he was getting ready to go to London to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference (a trip which he had to cancel, at the last moment, under doctors' orders), he turned down the advice of friends to get tailored a few churidars and achkans, and decided to go to London in his Gandhi cap, dhoti and buttoned-up coat—the latter a concession to the cold English climate.

Lal Bahadur rarely loses temper and is proud of his self-control. He has never hit his children or said a harsh word to them. On one occasion, many years ago when his eldest son, Hari, was a boy of ten, Lal Bahadur was provoked to anger by his pranks. He then chased the boy with a stick in hand, at the same time shouting at him to run away and hide in the bathroom!

Another time, when he was a Parliamentary Secretary in the U.P. Government, he was angry with a tongawalla who cheated him by taking him along a round-about route and thus delaying him to his destination. Lal Bahadur scolded the tongawalla sharply for that, and then consumed with contrition, paid him, by way of compensation, Rs. 2 instead of the normal fare of 8 annas.

The family's aversion for 'filthy lucre' and concern for rectitude are almost obsessive. Lal Bahadur's constant advice to his sons is: "Never hanker after money. Be honest and hard working." Another of his favourite mottoes is: "Hard work is equal to prayer."

When his 80-year old mother Ramdulari Devi first heard of her son's elevation to the highest honour in the land, her reaction was: *"Main Lal Bahadurse chahti hun ke jan chale tho jai, magar desh bana rahe."* ("I expect Lal Bahadur to ensure that the country prospers even if he has to sacrifice his life for it.") Her 'don't' to her son was: "Don't do anything which will cause grief to the poor."

He is so rigid in his personal code of conduct that when

on his appointment as Home Minister in Lucknow he had to surrender his house in Allahabad, he came to be dubbed the "Homeless Home Minister", because he would not use his authority and influence to get alternative accommodation for his family in Allahabad.

Once, much fuss was made on the Parliament floor about Lal Bahadur's residential electricity and water bills, paid by Government, which came to a fantastic sum of Rs. 550 and Rs. 150 per month respectively. To a man so punctilious about such matters, the allegation hurt. The actual position was that he was not aware until he actually looked into the bills how they swelled up so much.

It happened that the electricity meter was common for the servants' quarters, the office-block and the boundary lights. The actual consumption of electricity for personal use in his own house was less than half of the total consumption. However, as an act of self-denial, Lal Bahadur decided to pay out of his own pocket the entire electricity and water bills for the next six months. He added, "It has always been my practice to put out any fan or light which is burning unnecessarily."

Lal Bahadur has his own views about the prevalence of corruption in the country. He admits there is much corruption in India, as there is in any other country. "What is important is to take positive and concrete steps to fight it," he says. "Special publicity is hardly called for and gives a wrong impression. We are good as well as bad. But, by and large, if the leaders act right, people will get the proper lead. Practice is always more important than precept."

His office in the External Affairs Ministry sector of the South Block of the Secretariat, formerly occupied by Nehru, is austerely furnished, with straight-backed chairs—and none of the plush sofa set in the wing to receive visitors in greater comfort, which one finds in the office-rooms of most Ministers and Secretaries. The walls of the room are bare, without even the portraits of Gandhi and Nehru, let alone great paintings and framed landscapes.

In one corner there is a long shelf, with scores of books lined up, mostly political, possibly inherited from his predecessor. The beautiful Buddha statuette as well as the boo-

merang-shaped table that decorated the room when Nehru occupied it, are no more there; both, along with other articles associated with Nehru, have been removed to Teen Murti House, which has been convetted into a Nehru Museum.

Lal Bahadur's desk is neat and clean, with just a couple of papers, perhaps just arrived, in front of him, with possibly a file or two in the 'out' tray. He always sits bolt upright in his chair, and speaks with a soft, clear voice, as his big expressive eyes penetrate you. As in everything else, Lal Bahadur is meticulous about his public speeches. Unlike his distinguished predecessor, who always liked to speak *ex tempore*, he works hard on his speeches, and does not hesitate to read a speech. This is mainly the reason for the precision and clarity of his public statements. That is how, also, his speeches make a great impact on the listeners.

Until Lal Bahadur fell ill on June 27, the atmosphere around his residence at No. 1 Motilal Nehru Place resembled a miniature mela with groups of Congressmen and peasants from Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere loitering about, some lounging on the lawns, some excitedly gossiping, others reclining and snoozing, all waiting for Lal Bahadur to come out and talk to them or at least give them darshan. At intervals iced water would be served to the waiting crowd of people.

Morning time was the allotted period for the impromptu, mobile, stand-up 'durbar', when Lal Bahadur combined his morning 'constitutional' with interviews to the visitors. As he paced up and down the spacious lawns, the visitors took turns with him to discuss their problems or represent their grievances to him. Alas, that picturesque morning ritual cannot any more be seen—the doctors have banned it since the Prime Minister's illness, said to have been a mild heart attack (a second one, the first attack having occurred in 1959).

In those days he put in an 18-hour day schedule, which is now reduced to 14 hours. Nowadays he gets up at 6 in the morning, instead of at 5, but he cannot go to bed before midnight, whereas formerly he worked till the last file had been cleared.

He has also been enjoined by his doctors to eat his din-

ner by 8.30 p.m., which injunction is of course followed more in the breach than in observance. He has yet to pick up the technique of being able painlessly to hint to the visitor that his time was up and that he must make room for the next one. Almost every interview telescopes into the next and thus the entire day's schedule, so painstakingly drawn up by his secretaries, is completely put out of gear.

Even though the morning mobile, stand-up 'durbars' have been given up, to his great regret—through it he kept his fingers on the pulse of the country, in addition to getting his 'constitutional'—the other morning institution, the family tea ceremony, continues undisturbed. Indeed, that is the Prime Minister's only relaxation these days.

This morning tea ceremony is an elaborate affair, beginning at about 7 a.m. and going on for a couple of hours, when practically the entire family assembles in his bed room, and when the children's presence is a 'must'. Lal Bahadur loves children. Nothing is more relaxing for him than romping about the drawing room or in the garden with his grandchildren.

As the tea urn goes round filling cups, Lal Bahadur tweaks the cheeks of the little ones, quips with the older ones, discusses the big and small problems of the family, and in the meantime manages to get through with his shave. This daily ritual is equally valued by the rest of the family, for that is the only time they can meet and talk to 'Babuji'.

The entire family is strictly vegetarian, and Lal Bahadur does not smoke, much less drink. He is a spare eater, "eating like a bird," as an admirer called it. But he has a weakness for potatoes, cooked in any shape or form. His present residence at No. 1 Motilal Nehru Place has five bedrooms and houses a family totalling nineteen—four sons, two daughters and their husbands, six-grand-children, one daughter-in-law, his eighty year old mother Ramdulari and eighty-five year old uncle Ram Prasad, besides Lal Bahadur and his wife. In addition, there are daily over a dozen guests in the house.

His wife, at 50 a woman of much grace, is devout and orthodox, performs her daily hour-long puja, observes fast twice a week, likes to listen to keertans, and wears an

oversized vermillion tilak on her forehead. She insists on personally supervising the cooking in kitchen for the entire family.

Almost the only time Lalita Devi accompanied her husband on the latter's official trips was when Lal Bahadur visited Nepal in 1963—possibly, tempted by the chance to visit the famous Hindu shrines of Kathmandu such as the Pashupathinath temple.

A few months after Lal Bahadur assumed the Prime Ministership, a women's deputation waited upon Lalita Devi with a view to inducing her to come out and take part in public activities. Lal Bahadur put his foot down on any such suggestion. He told the delegation: "My wife is busy cooking and praying. If she goes out giving public speeches, it won't do any good to me and my family."

Evidently, Lalita Devi herself fully agrees with her husband on this matter. She told an interviewer: "I feel my place is in the home, looking after my family, and there is plenty to do."

Lal Bahadur's passion for Urdu poetry is well known. He never misses an invitation to a mushaira. Once travelling from Poona to Bombay by train, he got into competition with a friend in reciting Urdu *shairs* and verses. When the party reached Victoria Terminus, in Bombay, after three hours' journey, Lal Bahadur's stock had not run out, while the rival had already owned defeat.

Journalists often liken Lal Bahadur to his great preceptor from Uttar Pradesh, Govind Ballabh Pant, and like to refer to his alleged unmethodical ways and unpunctual habits. Lal Bahadur is at pains to point out that such a comparison is erroneous and unfair to him.

For example, a common charge made against him by correspondents in Delhi is that he is disorganised in his daily official and personal routine. Lal Bahadur asserted, "I have never been unmethodical in my work, and it has always been well organised."

To underscore his point, he added, "When I was the Secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee and later General Secretary of the A.I.C.C., I was known for being very systematic and methodical in my work. I had the same re-

putation in whatever capacity I functioned either in the State or the Central Government."

Then he explained, "During the last few years I have not been very regular in my meals. I have also been going to bed very late because there is always the desire in me to dispose of my papers once they are placed before me."

# A PURPOSEFUL RECORD

FOUR months in office are too brief a period for anyone to pronounce judgment on the performance of a Government. All the more so, in the case of a Prime Minister who was ailing for a month no sooner he took over. Any conclusions on the Shastri Government's record during the period under review have therefore to be qualified.

One outstanding impression of the Shastri Government's performance during this period is that the administration has been purposeful in policy. This is particularly noticed after the drift one witnessed in the last two years of the Nehru regime. The Government has shown that it has a mind of its own and knows where it is going. Its inability to act decisively on the food front was the only blot on its escutcheon.

When the Congress Parliamentary Party met to elect its leader following Nehru's death, Kamaraj had warned: "While Nehru was alive, the people were prepared to overlook our mistakes and still follow the Congress. But now if we are remiss, the people will never forgive us."

This warning seems to be very much in the minds of Lal Bahadur and his Cabinet colleagues as also the High Command. One can discern an extra effort put in all round to meet and conquer the problems facing the Government, in contrast to the blurred 'slow-motion' picture of the last days of the predecessor Government, when everyone looked up to Nehru to give the line, and if Nehru didn't, everything was at a standstill.

Now, each Ministry has recaptured initiative and is striving to demonstrate that it can think for itself and deliver the goods. To say this is not in any way to censure the Nehru regime, but to state an objective fact.

Asked what was in his view the most urgent problem confronting the country, Lal Bahadur told his first press conference, as Prime Minister-designate, that he gave the highest priority to the rising prices.

The food crisis itself was however not of the Shastri Government's making. Like the biblical poor, the food problem has been with us for the last seventeen years or more, erupting into a crisis every few years.

But the rise in prices this time would appear to have been truly unprecedented. The food prices had risen 22 per cent in 18 months—which was almost as much as the rise in the last ten years. The Government took energetic measures to tackle the crisis. These measures fell into three categories.

First, to meet the immediate problem, food ships destined to other ports were diverted to India and the import of foodgrains was considerably enlarged.

The fair-price shops programme was extended on a countrywide scale. In 1963, Government's subsidy towards the programme amounted to Rs. 37 crores; in 1964 the subsidy was expected to reach the figure of Rs. 50 crores. A commission was being appointed to look into the working of the fair price shops, about which much adverse comment was heard.

In the second category fell measures to meet the food problem in the near future. The Government has established a Food Grains Trading Corporation which would enter the market for the purchase of internal produce at remunerative prices and ensure a proper distribution system in the country.

As an interim measure, until the Agricultural Prices Commission took up the task, an *ad hoc* Committee under the chairmanship of L. K. Jha, Secretary to the Prime Minister and an economic expert, was appointed to recommend immediate prices at the producers' level first and then at the wholesalers' and retailers' levels.

In the third category was the Government's long-term policy, which was enunciated by Food Minister Subramaniam during the food debate in Parliament early in September. He declared that the Government's policy was based on an integrated approach to production, distribution and prices.

To that end the Government decided upon guaranteeing a remunerative price to the grower with a view to increasing internal production. The Agricultural Prices Commission set up in January, in time for the next rabi crop, was charged with the task of fixing reasonable margins for prices to be enforced at wholesalers' and retailers' levels, taking into account such relevant factors as cost of processing, storage, transport, geographical differences and seasonal fluctuations.

The new accent was going to be on intensive rather than protective irrigation. Legislation was introduced for quality control of improved seeds. It was planned to extend plant protection measures to the entire country by 1971. Besides, a new network of large and more efficient rice mills and other agricultural processing units were going to be established.

Plans were also being discussed about an American consortium assisting India to set up five giant fertiliser plants with a combined capacity of a million tons of nitrogen (half the proposed Fourth Plan target) within the next three or four years at a cost of Rs. 250 crores. But this project subsequently fell through.

The somewhat over-optimistic goal is that through all these measures the country should attain self-sufficiency in food by the end of the Fourth Plan.

On September 20, in Calcutta, the Prime Minister confidently asserted that the food position would improve in three weeks with the arrival of new crops and imports, and the crisis would pass by mid-October. But what with rice riots in Kerala and elsewhere, the food crisis persisted right into November, while Central and State Ministers talked and talked.

Similarly, steps were taken to control prices of cloth by law. In his Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort, in Delhi, the Prime Minister promised the people that the Government would see that essential commodities like cloth, sugar, oil, vegetables, match boxes and even bicycles were available at fair prices.

Simultaneously, the Prime Minister has been giving his attention to rectifying the imbalance in our development planning which had contributed to the current inflationary conditions in the country. As early as August 15, in a letter

to his Cabinet colleagues, Lal Bahadur urged a sizable reduction in Government expenditure.

The country, he wrote, was "facing a situation which looked like developing into a crisis and therefore stricter standards of fixing priorities are called for." The Prime Minister laid down that the criterion for the choice of immediate priorities should be the interests of the common man. "What mattered to him (common man) was food, shelter, medical facilities and employment opportunities," said Lal Bahadur. "It is imperative that Government policies in the immediate future should be geared to meeting these requirements."

In this famous letter, which was later distorted and misrepresented by the leftists within the Congress party and the communists outside, Lal Bahadur suggested that some of the projects in the field of heavy industries, where a real start had yet to be made, should be postponed. He however made it clear that he was not suggesting a permanent shift in emphasis.

To strengthen the foundation of the Fourth Plan what was needed, according to the Prime Minister, was not the launching of new projects but ensuring that the projects already under construction were completed with speed and the projects which had been completed gave a good return to the community.

Lal Bahadur emphasized that it was most desirable that the people should feel that the additional burden they had carried during the last few years brought tangible benefits to them, and what was worrying him was the return to the community for the investments made at great sacrifices and with a rising tax burden was totally inadequate.

The Prime Minister had therefore suggested that the Finance Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission should attempt a fresh assessment of the projects and programmes for which funds were being allocated now or were likely to be allocated next year. This, according to him, would not only result in substantial economies immediately but also hasten the attainment of long-term objectives. How far these expectations would be realised has yet to be seen.

Simultaneously, Home Minister Nanda launched an un-

precedented crusade against corruption. Finance Minister T. T. Krishnamachari embarked upon far-reaching measures to rein up soaring prices and track the staggering volume of unaccounted "black" wealth choking the country's economy. And Defence Minister Chavan pulled off a spectacular Rs. 90-crore deal with Moscow that would considerably reinforce India's defences and, what is important, without offending Washington.

Almost for the first time in many years, the country witnessed with gratification action taken against black-marketeers, food-hoarders, smugglers and foreign-exchange racketeers on a scale never attempted before. At the Home Ministry, Mr. Nanda has promised to implement a large part of the Santhanam Committee's far-reaching recommendations to uproot corruption in the country's administrative and public life.

The most important of all, on a matter on which the Government has hitherto been accused of stalling, the Shastri Government has acted resolutely. It has approved a code of conduct for Ministers under which every Minister has to make a declaration of his assets— to the Prime Minister at the Centre and the Chief Ministers in the States—on assuming office, and subsequently every year.

The code prohibits Ministers from using their authority to further the business interests of their relatives and friends. It also lays down 'dos' and 'donts' about collecting funds for political parties by Ministers. It prescribes a procedure for dealing with allegations about a Minister contravening the code of conduct or otherwise departing from standards of integrity and honesty.

Chavan's fruitful talks first in Washington and then in Moscow have enabled India to envisage a five-year Defence Plan, 1964-69, aiming at a well-equipped army of 825,000 men, a 45 squadron air force with the latest radar and communications facilities, a phased programme of modernisation of the Navy, an adequate network of border roads and supply lines and the establishment of a proper defence production base eventually to meet most of the requirements of our armed forces.

Chavan's Soviet deal includes obtaining part of the plant and machinery for the MIG complex; buying certain num-

ber of MIG 21s to help India raise about three supersonic squadrons; getting some light tanks and 28 helicopters and obtaining naval craft including a submarine (all payment in rupees).

In the sphere of external affairs, for the first time, India has a wholetime foreign minister, and Saradar Swaran Singh, on his appointment, set out on an energetic fence-mending mission to India's immediate neighbours, Afghanistan, Nepal, Burma and Ceylon. In this sphere the most spectacular achievement of the Shastri Government and a feather in Lal Bahadur's cap was however the Indo-Ceylonese agreement on the future of the 9.70 lakh "stateless" Indian residents of the island, signed on October 30. This problem had defied solution for seventeen or more years. The last attempt at a settlement, made in 1954, had flopped badly.

Indeed, this agreement represented the first settlement of an outstanding problem between India and a neighbouring state. The ten-point agreement provided for the grant of Ceylonese citizenship to 3,00,000 Indian settlers, and for the repatriation of 5,20,000 of them to India, the entire process to be spaced over fifteen years. The status of the balance of 1,50,000 is to be determined later.

Under the agreement Indians leaving the island for India would be permitted to take with them all their assets, including their provident fund and gratuity, subject to the current exchange control regulations.

There would be no discrimination as between Indian repatriates and other foreigners in the matter of the assets permitted to be taken out of the country.

Nor would effort be spared to maintain a bridge of negotiations between India and Pakistan with a view to improving relations between the two countries. To that end Jayaprakash Narayan was encouraged in his peregrinations between Delhi and Pindi, and no restrictions whatsoever were placed on Sheikh Abdullah's freedom of expression even though quite often his fulminations have been tantamount to preaching secession, which is treason under the country's law.

Lal Bahadur himself met President Ayub at Karachi at lunch on October 12 on his way back from the Cairo Summit meeting of the Non-aligned. It was obviously no more than

a preliminary getting-acquainted meet, but even as such, a beginning worth making. It was hoped that it would be followed by more fruitful talks between the two leaders.

Yet another running sore is the Naga problem. On this front too, a non-official move to pacify the Naga people's legitimate aspirations, within the four corners of the present Constitution, has been encouraged by the Government. A Government delegation carried on talks with the rebel underground Naga leaders, assisted by a 'Peace Mission' comprising Jayaprakash Narayan, the Rev. Michael Scott and Mr. B. P. Chaliha, Chief Minister of Assam. If nothing ultimately comes out of the talks, the fault would not be that of the Government of India.

To understand New Delhi's new approach to the Naga problem, however, one has to remember that for over 15 years the method of military force has been tried, and today the problem is as far away from solution as ever before. Then why not give a chance to the other method, that of conciliation? That would appear to sum up the Shastri Government's approach to the Naga problem.

With China, however, the Shastri Government is disposed to show no quarter. The Prime Minister has declared that nothing short of the Colombo Proposals could be the basis of any negotiations with Peking. New Delhi has indicated its preparedness to consider Colombo's latest suggestion that Peking should withdraw from seven posts in Ladakh as a preliminary to the opening of any talks. But Peking has failed to respond to the Colombo proposals.

At the same time, Indian diplomatic emissaries were sent out in advance to African countries in preparation for Lal Bahadur's visit to Cairo to attend the Non-aligned Summit and to present the Indian viewpoint to those countries on the Chinese dispute and the Kashmir question as also on the various African and Asian problems.

Lal Bahadur's participation in the Non-aligned Summit at Cairo in October, his first big international event, was not only fruitful but a great success. His five-point peace plan presented to the Cairo Conference got an enthusiastic reception from all sectors of the conference and shaped in a large measure the final resolution on international peace and

brought the Indian Prime Minister recognition as a worthy successor of Nehru as a protagonist of world peace and peaceful co-existence.

In the meantime, President Radhakrishnan did some international fence-mending on his own. In Moscow, he reaffirmed the friendly relations between Soviet Russia and India, following the formation of the Shastri Government in New Delhi, and in the process, reassured the Soviet Government about the continuance of India's non-aligned stance and identity of views between the two Governments on peaceful co-existence and disarmament.

In Dublin, the Indian President succeeded in making the Irish Government revise its understanding of the Kashmir question, following the strange attitude adopted by the Irish representative in the U.N. Security Council when the issue came up before that body in 1962.

"Ireland is not committed to any particular solution of the Kashmir problem," Sean Francis Lemass, Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, told Indian correspondents accompanying President Radhakrishnan.

In 1962, the Irish representative's speech at the Security Council had created the impression that his country supported the Pakistani claim of self-determination for the Kashmiris.

Now Sean Lamass ruled out independence for Kashmir as also the right of a national minority to opt out of a state.

This is some record for the first four months in office for any Prime Minister. The overwhelming defeat of the no-confidence motion initiated by the opposition in the Lok Sabha, about this time, was a foregone conclusion, what with the Congress Party enjoying a "brute" majority in that Chamber. But the five-day debate further helped to underscore the endeavours and achievements of the Government as also its "fighting-fit" condition to face the assault and battery of the opposition.

The debate itself was distinguished by a courageous statement by the Prime Minister. In meeting the charge of deviation from Nehru policies, Lal Bahadur boldly asserted his right to adjust his course according to the changing conditions and requirements, while remaining loyal to Nehru.

He told Hiren Mukherjee, the Communist leader, who

made that charge : "In a democracy there is nothing like deviation or a deviationist. It does not find a place in the dictionary of a democracy. In a democracy there is every opportunity for re-thinking and freedom for the formation of new schemes and policies."

Lal Bahadur recalled how Nehru, even though "he loved Gandhiji immensely and he gave his fullest loyalty to him," had his "own independent way of thinking . . . yet when he (Nehru) joined the Government, it was not possible for him to put into effect each and every idea of Gandhiji. But that does not mean that he was in any way disloyal to Gandhiji or he did not do what was right."

Lal Bahadur then pointed out, for the benefit of the Communists, how even Lenin had to modify Marx in practice, how Stalin too changed things to suit his own ulterior purposes, and how Krushchev "flatly refused to tread the beaten track", even though the basic ideology was wholly acceptable to Krushchev.

The Prime Minister went on to enunciate the principle: "A leader generally, if he is really the leader, does not walk on beaten tracks, because in the political field situations change, men change, conditions change and environments change and a real leader must match his policies to the changing conditions."

Out of that debate Lal Bahadur came off with flying colours and with his prestige enhanced. The debate incidentally indicated that the Communists would get short shrift from the Shastri Government.

It could now be claimed that there is genuine "joint responsibility" prevailing in the Shastri Cabinet. At the Cabinet meetings, subjects are fully and freely discussed. The Minister concerned presents his problem, his colleagues participate in a full-dress discussion, and then the Prime Minister sums up the discussion, and his summing up constitutes the Cabinet decision.

In the Nehru Cabinet, a discussion generally meant that the Minister concerned formally presented his problem at the Cabinet meeting and then Nehru explained the line proposed to be taken. The decision having already been taken by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Minister

concerned, the presentation of that decision to the Cabinet was a mere formality. Quite often, the other Ministers heard of a particular governmental decision after it had already been taken and enforced.

The new leadership's achievement in Punjab within a few days of its taking over, went a long way to boost up the morale of the Congress Party. Pratap Singh Kairon, Punjab's Chief Minister, who for a long time appeared to bear a charmed life and had till then defied every effort to oust him, was thrown out on his ear, so to say, within 24 hours of the release of the Das Commission's adverse report against him.

Even more heartening was the smooth efficiency with which the High Command handled the succession question in Punjab, which was considered the thorniest of all. After a consensus operation put through among Congressmen in Punjab, the High Command pulled off Kairon's successor like a rabbit out of a hat. Ram Kishen, a dark horse, was imposed as leader and Chief Minister on both factions in the State legislature party without a murmer of demur from either faction.

Sardar Swaran Singh, who was deputed by the High Command to unravel the succession tangle in Punjab, accomplished his mission with a remarkable finesse. Swaran Singh put through his own version of the consensus, at the end of which he got the two contending factions to eat out of his hands and accept a non-controversial, third party compromise candidate.

But on the debit side of the new leadership's record of the first four months are the unseemly Kerala revolt in which the Congress rebels joined hands with the opposition to oust the Congress Ministry; the recalcitrance in Orissa which defied with impunity the High Command's wishes, and the perpetually squabbling Uttar Pradesh Congress exposing, for all the world to see, a newly opened sore in the Gonda election scandal in which the State Government's hands were badly soiled.

The first meeting of the A.I.C.C. after Nehru's death, held in New Delhi, in the last week of August, betrayed disquieting symptoms.

At the meeting, to the horror of the High Command, mem-

bers threw decorum to the winds, squabbled, bickered and insinuated against the revered departed leader. Indeed, the rightists and the disgruntled elements mounted an unseemly attack on the leadership and questioned its motives and generally betrayed the indiscipline and mentality of unruly students demonstrating against authority.

It was not until Lal Bahadur intervened and poured oil over troubled waters and convincingly refuted the charges against Nehru that the house was brought to order and the mover persuaded to withdraw his resolution.

Lal Bahadur took the house into confidence and explained the circumstances in which the Kamaraj Plan was conceived and implemented. He gave them a detailed account of the talk that Nehru had with him, at the time, on the vexed question, to disprove the allegation that the Kamaraj Plan was a plot to oust certain unwanted leaders from the Cabinet.

This reasoned plea made a great impression on the audience and changed the tide. Indeed, the Delhi session of the A.I.C.C. can truly be claimed as a personal triumph for Lal Bahadur.

A week later, it was the turn of the leftists to attack the leadership. The leftists in the Congress met in Delhi in a Northern India Congress workers' convention. At this convention, the leadership was charged with the betrayal of Nehru and deviation from his policies. Speakers also alleged that the Shastri Government was under the influence of "reactionaries".

At this critical juncture in the party's history, however, the Congress is fortunate to have a wise and astute leader at its head in Kamaraj who enjoys the confidence of all sectors in the party. And then, in the Prime Minister, we have a man of equally high integrity, patriotism and acceptability in the entire country. The unity of purpose and statesmanship of these two leaders is on trial.

If they are able to hang together and handle the current crisis of confidence in the party with tact and firmness, there may still be hope for the Congress. Integrated by a collective leadership drawing its strength from the powerful State Congress units, particularly the solid support of the South and East, the Shastri-Kamaraj axis should easily ride

the storm, as it is assured of the loyalty and support of the hard core, centrist majority of the Congress rank and file.

The enforcement of correct precept and example at the top, the imposition of ruthless discipline on the rank and file and a boost to the morale of the party through wise, prompt and firm governmental policies and action could do the trick.

A weak spot in the Shastri regime however is the growing power of the provincial satraps, the State Chief Ministers within the Congress Party and their tendency to defy Central fiats and to get away with it. If this tendency is not nipped in the bud, there is grave danger ahead.

*A Postscript*

# INDIA'S MAN OF DESTINY

LAL BAHADUR'S greatest achievement in his first year as Prime Minister was to have survived.

From the moment he took over the helm, the State has been buffeted by a series of storms, each more menacing than the other. That he was able to keep it on even keel, without allowing himself to be swept overboard by the lashing seas, is a creditable performance in itself.

It was thus that at the conclusion of his first year in office, the foreign and domestic press were unanimous in congratulating Lal Bahadur on his negative, nonetheless remarkable, achievement—on the steady hand with which he had piloted the ship of state during a most critical period, successfully negotiating the shoals and the reefs in its path.

Lal Bahadur has been growing in the job. With an open mind and ever ready to learn, his foreign trips—to the Soviet Union, to the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference in London, to Ottawa and his meetings with Presidents Nasser and Tito—have been invaluable education to him in international affairs, while he made a great impression on the leadership and press of those countries.

With the supreme crisis jointly imposed on our country by Pindi and Peking, in September, 1965, Lal Bahadur rose to a new height. He now truly attained an international stature.

Be it noted that during this entire period Prime Minister Shastri was kept on the run, from crisis to crisis, improvising, temporising, meeting the situation as it came—no time to rest back, think and formulate new policies. The greatest handicap he had initially to conquer was the constant, invidious comparisons between him and the great Nehru that

people drew at every step.

Lal Bahadur's election as leader of the party and Prime Minister of the country was the outcome of a consensus in the Congress Party. That implied he was only first among equals and automatically imposed certain limitations on his freedom of action, unlike the benevolent "dictatorship" his predecessor exercised over the party and the country.

These circumstances inevitably came in the way of quick and clear-cut decisions, as it often involved anticipating others' approval or canvassing the consensus of the elders of the party. Instinctively cautious by nature, Lal Bahadur had now to watch his step all the more and make sure that he carried the party with him on every decision and action of his. But gradually one saw him asserting himself and shedding away the shackles, without much ado.

Then again, every one in the country, the press and politician, thought it incumbent upon him to advise Lal Bahadur on how to run his government. First, there was the so-called "syndicate" or "caucus" to reckon with, who constituted themselves, on their own, a kind of "kitchen cabinet", claiming to guide the Prime Minister in his duties. Then, there were the Chief Ministers of States, who were already beginning to get out of hand in Nehru's time, and now thought they had won independence of the central leadership. They were not easily amenable to the Central Government's directives and the Prime Minister's advice.

Lal Bahadur however sardonically remarked: "When Nehru was alive, they yessed him in Delhi and went back to their States and sabotaged his decisions and wishes. Now they say no to me to my face. The end-product is the same!"

The "caucus" or the "syndicate" disintegrated or was rendered redundant in no time. It however needed greater tact and patience to get round the powerful state bosses, the Chief Ministers, and put them in harness. Through all this, the Shastri-Kamaraj axis has remained in tact and strong. As long as these two leaders hang together, Shastri's leadership stands four-square within the party, which is what matters, as the opposition in Parliament is numerically so weak and divided that it can never hope to overthrow the Govern-ment. Besides, Lal Bahadur personally enjoys the esteem of

most leaders in the opposition.

Nor was he spared of internal subterranean hostility within the party from a section of Congressmen who had opposed his election to the party leadership and had now set up a whispering campaign against him, ever waiting to pounce upon his mistakes. These forces too withered away before long, with Lal Bahadur completely ignoring them.

At the AICC meetings, Lal Bahadur easily dominated the proceedings, compelled respect and attention and quelled many a grave party crisis by his personal intervention. A notable example was the crisis that arose at the Bangalore session of the AICC, following Morarji Desai's vehement opposition to a resolution amending a past Congress resolution to enable Kamaraj to be re-elected as Congress President for a second term.

A last-minute, effective intercession by Lal Bahadur and his personal appeal, accompanied by a subtle modification of the motion before the house, persuaded Morarji to withdraw his opposition. The resolution was carried.

Thus, working with the skill and industry of a beaver, Lal Bahadur first consolidated his position politically and in the party. Having done that, he could face and dare the entire world, including the parliamentary opposition. But on the governmental front, Lal Bahadur was plunging from crisis to crisis at home. In the international arena too, the Government found itself stuck.

The food crisis has become chronic with us, coming as it does in a fateful cycle and hitting the country in a big way every four years. As stated earlier in this book, however, the measures taken by Government, particularly in regard to food production and distribution carried conviction. For the first time the root of the problem was now being tackled, with steps taken to guarantee minimum prices to the producer, to control distribution and to provide incentives to increase production.

The foreign exchange crisis, far from easing, is intensifying from year to year, to the point of almost paralysing industrialisation and throwing a spanner in the Third Five Year Plan. The crushing defeat of the Congress Party and the triumph of the pro-Peking Left Communists in the Kerala mid-term

general election in March 1965 was indeed a shock and a bad blow to the Congress. The fierce language riots in Madras nearly bowled over the Shastri Government and threatened to strike at the very foundations of India's political integrity.

The handling of the grave situation in the South called for a combination of statesmanship, patience, imagination and firmness. The Government had to make sure that any measures taken to pacify the South did not raise another hornet's nest in the North. The storm in the South was a veritable typhoon in velocity and the havoc it wrought. In shaking the Shastri Government to its roots, the crisis however tested the strength of those roots and found them firm and deep. Lal Bahadur had now survived the worst political crisis of his career.

In the sphere of External Affairs, Lal Bahadur was impaled on the dilemma of a dire two-front threat, posed by the sinister Sino-Pak collusion, with President Ayub and Mao Tse-tung in turns needling India. Past postures and policies had placed the Government in such a tight situation that there was now hardly any room for manoeuvre.

To Lal Bahadur's clear-sighted vision, the supreme problem before the country in the international sphere was China. His public statements displayed comparatively much readiness to treat with Pakistan, but he was uncompromising and extra firm towards China.

In pursuance of that approach, Lal Bahadur seemed to have set for himself the task of clearing the decks of the other encumbrances so as to enable the country to meet the Chinese menace single-mindedly and without distractions.

An earnest effort in that direction was Lal Bahadur's initiative in releasing Sheikh Abdullah, in a desperate, if illogical, hope that it might somehow lead to a way out of the maze in which India had found herself caught over the Kashmir question. The bold move, as it could have been predicted from the outset, went awry.

It looked as though public opinion and the opposition parties' vehemence plus opposition from some of his own cabinet colleagues browbeat the Prime Minister from pur-

suing the logic of his action in releasing the Sheikh. It led to an awkward interlude in which Government was exposed to some very legitimate and fierce criticism in the country. It all smacked of a policy of drift and uncoordinated thinking—a policy that vaguely hoped for something to turn up while knowing fully well that nothing could, certainly not along the path chosen by the Government. It bristled with contradictions. Everyone, including the Government, was therefore happy and greatly relieved when the Sheikh obligingly overplayed his hand and made out a fine case for his renewed detention.

Right through the muddle however, one could discern the Shastri Government's motive which was to strike a way out of the Kashmir deadlock, so that the country could concentrate on the greater danger of China. The move miscarried because public opinion was not prepared for any radical change in the Government's policy on the question. Nor did Lal Bahadur think he was yet strong enough to seek to change that public opinion by a courageous lead to break new ground.

It is the same concern to clear the decks that prompted Lal Bahadur to bless the Naga Peace Mission and enforce cease-fire in the region. Here, he also reasoned that since for fifteen years the military means have been tried and have failed to solve the Naga problem, there would be nothing lost, and everything gained, by giving a chance to the conciliatory methods.

Though a satisfactory solution is still not in sight, the cease-fire has been extended readily, and again and again, by both sides and a long-simmering explosive problem has been de-fused. In the meantime, there are indications that the Naga rebels who had remained underground, living a hunted life for fifteen long years, are beginning to like the taste of freedom and life above ground. To that limited extent, it may be claimed that the Shastri Government has scored a point in its favour.

As Lal Bahadur struggled with a multitude of problems that crowded round him, like chickens coming home to roost, unable to make much headway with them, opposition within the party, in Parliament and in the country fastened on

him the triple label of "indecision, inaction and timidity." This was the period when the Shastri Government seemed to muffed everything it touched.

A typical press comment of the period mirroring the depressing and critical mood of the nation is the following excerpt from an editorial in the "Times of India". Reviewing the stormy budget session of Parliament, the editorial charged the Government with "a lack of firmness of purpose", and catalogued its failures :

"On the language issue it (Government) appeared to have no inkling of the depth of feeling in the South and was completely taken by surprise when the anti-Hindi agitation took a violent turn. On the controversy surrounding the Sheikh's passport it did not know until the storm had almost blown over that he had described himself as an Indian national in his application. In the Orissa case it tried to conceal the facts from the House and when the so-called confidential reports were placed on the table of the House it found itself in a tight corner. On the Kutch border dispute it even forgot for a while that the issue figured in the 1960 agreement with Pakistan."

A general disillusionment set in the country following discomfiture in the international arena, accompanied, at home, by worsening economic conditions, increasing taxes and soaring commodity prices and alarming disruptive trends asserting themselves within the ruling party. In the background hung, like a spectre, the military humiliation suffered by the nation at the hands of China in 1962. It all generated in the country a wave of masochistic self-depreciation that further lowered the morale of the nation.

It was such a psychological moment—a moment which he thought was just right—that President Ayub chose to strike at India. He had convinced himself that India had politically and militarily so deteriorated that he had only to give a push for her Government to collapse. Thus in April he started with a probing test in the Rann of Kutch. Attacked at a point of disadvantage to us and of Pakistan's choosing, the Indian defence forces were initially taken by surprise and unprepared. That only further confirmed to Ayub his conviction that New Delhi was now a "push-over".

So far as India was concerned, the Pakistani provocations in Kutch were the last straw on the camel's back. The Indian Army's failure to throw the Pakistani intruders out of Indian soil in that region, provoked an angry storm in the country.

Goaded by opposition and public opinion at home and jeers by the Western press which dubbed our Army as a "paper tiger", Lal Bahadur for the first time showed his teeth. He sternly warned Pakistan that if she did not desist from aggressive activities on the Kutch border, he would give the Army a free hand to settle the question as it saw fit. New Delhi openly hinted that India would be compelled to open a second front at a point of her choosing anywhere along the Pakistani border.

Either because of New Delhi's threat or because he preferred to have some breathing-time before he made his next move, in Kashmir, Ayub bowed to British and American pressure, and an agreement was arrived at, which restored the *status quo ante*, as insisted upon by Lal Bahadur, and agreed to refer the border dispute to arbitration. The latter provision was however seized upon by the opposition and described as an illegitimate concession made to Pakistan.

But here the hard steel under the soft velvet—which was to be noticed more often hereafter — revealed itself. Lal Bahadur tenaciously defended the agreement in Parliament and in the AICC, and won the day. Some of the opposition parties held public demonstrations to protest against the Kutch agreement. The demonstrations were severely ignored by the Government.

The Kutch provocations were the turning point in the Government of India's defence postures. From this point onwards the Sermon on the Mount was replaced by the other biblical maxim "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." It was clear that, as Lal Bahadur had warned Pakistan, the problem of Pakistani military provocations had now been passed on to the Army to tackle.

The first portent of the switch-over to the new policy was the spirited occupation in May of the three Pakistani posts in Kargil from which the Pakistanis were menacing our road to Leh, in Ladakh. There was now vigorous tit for tat on the Cease-fire Line, whereas in the past, every time the Pakis-

tanis violated the Line, we contented ourselves with protests to the U.N.

President Ayub still failed to notice the Indian Army's new mood and temper. Nor did he realise that he was now dealing with Lal Bahadur's hard cold steel underneath, and not the soft velvet on the surface, which the Pakistani dictator had unwittingly, by his own rash postures, ripped off. Of Lal Bahadur it could be said that he is slow of decision, but once he takes a decision, it will be implemented resolutely, and there is no looking back.

It is apparent that President Ayub took wrong readings from the Kutch incidents when he decided that he could easily take on the Indian Army with his superior American arms and equipment. He then put implicit faith in the wishful, exaggerated reports about the political conditions prevailing within Kashmir and concluded that the Kashmir Valley was ripe for "liberation" through infiltration and internal subversion, supported by Pakistani arms.

Ayub was, however, taken aback by New Delhi's sharp reaction and the Indian Army's hot response to the opening gambit of his carefully-planned, three-phased Kashmir campaign. The Indian Government's reaction was completely out of character with the traditional, pacific, leaning-over-backwards policy pursued by India in the last seventeen years.

Lal Bahadur had let go the leash and the Indian Army bounded forward. It now did not hesitate to cross the Cease-fire Line in Kashmir to seal off the access and exit points of the infiltrators. Nor to forcibly occupy strategic points on the other side of the Line. Nor even to attack from air and ground Pakistani bases far inside West Pakistan territory from which the attack on Kashmir and the rest of the country was being launched.

Pakistan was not prepared for such a hot reception. Nor was it prepared for the rough handling received at the Indian Army's hands by its American-gifted Patton tanks and Sabre jets, considered invincible by the Pakistanis as well as the Americans. They had lost over 400 of their tanks and nearly 65 aircrafts, with no hopes of getting replacements from America.

Thus the meek, mild man from Banaras has taken deci-

sions which Nehru may never have. And what is more, his cool composure and the unambiguous, firm language of his statements and broadcasts, his realistic approach that yet refused to yield on fundamentals, served as a powerful tonic to the nation at a moment of greatest crisis in its history.

When Pakistan sent 5000 armed infiltrators into Kashmir, Lal Bahadur warned Ayub that if the menace did not stop, India would have to think in terms of tackling the problem in a "larger context". He was as good as his word. The Indian Army crossed the Cease-fire Line and occupied strategic posts in Kargil, Tithwal, Uri and Poonch sectors.

When the Pakistani Army crossed the international border into the Chhamb area in Jammu with 75 Patton tanks, Lal Bahadur did not hesitate to call in the Air Force to support our ground forces; and then, to send Indian Army columns in three prongs across the international border into West Pakistan in order to neutralise the Pak thrust into Chhamb.

Lal Bahadur's reply to the Chinese three-day ultimatum was equally firm, unwavering and realistic. It put Peking completely in the wrong, so much so that the latter had to extend its ultimatum by another three days, which then fizzled out.

In his reply, the Prime Minister repudiated China's allegations against India of border violations in the Sikkim sector, offered a joint Sino-Indian inspection of the Sikkim frontier to check up on the Chinese charges—a proposal which Peking itself had made some time ago—and then unequivocally declared: "The might of China will not deter us from defending our territorial integrity". He then assured Parliament: "The House may rest assured that we are fully vigilant and that, if we are attacked, we shall fight for our freedom with grim determination."

Lal Bahadur was equally clear-cut, convincing and realistic in his response to U Thant's effort at stopping the Indo-Pak conflict. The Prime Minister readily and unconditionally agreed to cease fire, provided Pakistan agreed to it. He then pointed out the practical difficulty involved in the proposition in dealing with a couple of thousand infiltrators still at large within the State of Kashmir and the need to prevent further infiltrations.

The Security Council resolution was on terms broadly acceptable to India, even though it also sought to meet Pakistan's demand by including a provision requiring the Security Council to follow up a cease-fire and withdrawal of "armed personnel" on either side, with a settlement of the political differences between India and Pakistan. India of course took a firm stand against the linking up of the cessation of fighting with a political settlement.

For once, India's tactics at the UN Security Council were effective and paid dividends. The Indian Delegation's dignified walk-out of the meeting of the Security Council while Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto spent himself out with hysterical and vulgar abuse against our country, had the desired impact on the immediate audience. The ebuliant Pakistani Foreign Minister this time seemed to have overshot the bolt.

India successfully and firmly withstood the initial intimidatory efforts of Pakistan's friends in that international body. No cajolry or coercive threat could whittle our stand that the Kashmir issue is closed—now all the more so, after Pakistan's reckless attempt to solve it by military force; that Kashmir is an integral part of India and therefore there could be no question of a plebiscite for a section of the Indian nation.

Then, India went over to the offensive, and insisted that the only territory of Kashmir negotiable was that part of it now under illegal occupation of Pakistan—which Pakistan must vacate.

And almost for the first time, we seemed to get a hearing in that international forum, now that we were no more on the defensive and had carried the battle in the enemy's territory, in the diplomatic field too.

The lesson was once again underlined to us that the world respects and listens to firmness and strength.

The fortyeight-day war had wrought a miracle for the country. The fiery ordeal had cleansed the nation's soul and forged a rare unity among the people. Through the valour and sacrifices equally of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Anglo-Indian and Parsi youths and the Indian Armed Forces' sterling performance in the field of battle, that miracle had

been wrought. It further underscored the inherent strength of a composite, secular state that is India.

Above all, the crisis revealed hitherto hidden depths of Lal Bahadur's personality. His poise and composure in a crisis was infectious; his capacity to take a fateful decision and stand by it unflinchingly inspired confidence all round.

Elsewhere in this book I have referred to Lal Bahadur's great asset—his right political instincts. A political leader is great because of his correct political reflexes; in a given situation he instinctively reacts correctly. For in a crisis, decisions are taken on the spur of the moment, without the benefit of the hind-sight. Whether those decisions were right or wrong would only be known too late. That great asset of Lal Bahadur's stood him in good stead in the supreme test.

Shastri has, indeed, proved India's man of destiny. His stocks, at home and abroad, have gone up overnight. He has rehabilitated India's image in the world's eyes, provided the Indian Army an opportunity to prove its worth and wipe out the smear it suffered in 1962, and restored his people's self-confidence and morale which had reached a pathetic low about this time.

What is more, Shastri demonstrated the potential and actual strength of the many-splendoured mosaic of diverse religions and communities that constitute the fine fabric of our nationhood.

The record-breaking crowds, estimated at a million strong, that greeted Shastri when he visited Bombay following the cease-fire on the Indo-Pak border, and ever larger crowds, numbering two million, that cheered him in Calcutta, are the measure of the people's affection, gratitude and pride towards their hero.

He had given them, for the first time in many depressing years, the taste of the honey of triumph, in however modest a measure. He had told the insolent and arrogant Ayub where he got off, pricked the balloon of his much-vaunted military power and cut his Army to size.

# *APPENDIX 1*

## FIRST BROADCAST TO THE NATION BY THE PRIME MINISTER *

FRIENDS: The towering personality who was in our midst till but a few days ago is no longer with us to lead and guide us. The last of his mortal remains have gone to join the soil and water of the India that he loved. Even though Jawaharlalji has passed from our sight, his work and his inspiration lives on. And we, to whom was given the privilege of being his countrymen, contemporaries and colleagues, must now brace ourselves to the new tasks ahead, and face up to the situation whose very prospect we once used to dread—the situation of an India without Jawaharlal.

There comes a time in the life of every nation when it stands at the cross-roads of history and must choose which way to go. But for us there need be no difficulty or hesitation, no looking to right or left. Our way is straight and clear—the building up of a socialist democracy at home with freedom and prosperity for all, and the maintenance of world peace and friendship with all nations abroad. To that straight road and to these shining ideals we re-dedicate ourselves today.

No better beginning could have been given than by my colleagues of the Congress Party, who in the hour of decision resolved to come together. I am also grateful to the nation for the way they have received my taking over of the heavy burden cast on me. What I need in the discharge of these heavy responsibilities is the willing co-operation of our people. They are our real source of strength and it is from them that I shall seek to draw my inspiration.

Among the major tasks before us none is of greater importance in our strength and stability than the task of building up the unity and solidarity of our people. Our country has often stood as a solid rock in the face of common danger and there is a deep underlying unity which runs like a golden thread through all our seeming diversity, but we cannot take national unity and solidarity for granted, or afford to be complacent, for there have been occasions when unfortunate and disturbing divisions, some of them accompanied by violence, have appeared in our society. I know that these disturbances gave a deep shock and caused great anguish to Jawaharlalji who had, all through his life, worked untiringly for communal harmony, and mutual tolera-

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* Broadcast delivered on 11th June 1964.

tion. Let people in different parts of the country, however strong their feelings might be on particular issues, never forget that they are Indians first, and that all differences must be resolved within the unalterable framework of one nation and one country. Let us make every endeavour to foster this feeling of oneness and to carry forward the work of national integration started with the National Integration Conference in 1961.

Political democracy and the way it has functioned in our country is surely a great achievement. Here again we owe an immeasurable debt to Jawaharlalji for his deep attachment to democracy as a form of Government and as a way of life. There is something in our older cultural heritage too. I have particularly in view that enduring strand in Indian life which can be best described as respect for human personality and the spirit of toleration. I have no doubt in my mind that it is by methods of persuasion and mutual accommodation, and by a constant search for areas of agreement as basis for action, that democracy can be worked. It is in this spirit that I shall devote myself to the duties and responsibilities of the office I have been called upon to fill.

Of all the problems facing us, none is more distressing than that of the dire poverty in which tens of millions of our countrymen continue to live. How I wish that I would be able to lighten the burden of poverty on our people. I cannot forget particularly the claims of the most backward sections like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who had suffered neglect, and had to endure disabilities for many centuries. It would be my proud privilege to work for the establishment of a more just social order.

At the moment we are in the process of building up our defences. The burden is a heavy one, but recent events have left us with no choice. There can be no letting-up in these preparations, but we are determined that these should not affect our first and foremost priority—the development of our economy.

The main question before us is of execution of our plans and policies and how to introduce the necessary vigour and efficiency required for it.

This naturally takes me to the problem of efficiency and integrity of the administration. Our public services have on the whole responded well to the numerous calls that have been made upon them since Independence. But there is a widespread feeling—which I share—that extensive reform of the administration is essential if the tasks of economic development and social reconstruction are to be accomplished. Apart from this, it is essential in a democracy that the public services should be sensitive to the feelings and sentiments of individual citizens. They should under all circumstances function not only with formal courtesy but in a spirit of service, sympathy and humanity. The administrative organisation and its methods and processes, must be modernised if it is to become an effective instrument of economic

change. I shall do my best to have systematic attention paid to these major problems and I shall apply myself closely to the problem of administrative reforms in its various aspects.

I know that our people are full of enthusiasm and that they are prepared to accept many sacrifices in order to keep the nation stable and strong. But sometimes their impatience gets the better of them and then there are unfortunate happenings which cause pain to everyone. Discipline and united action is the source of real strength for the nation. May I also appeal to the members of the various political parties to lend us a helping hand in the task of national reconstruction? Similarly the Press can play a very useful role as indeed they have been doing all this time. Theirs is a position of great strength and influence and I have no doubt that their influence will always be exercised for the public good. We are all of us different elements working in different ways towards a common goal—the service of the people. I shall respect these differences, but I shall continue to lay emphasis on the oneness of our objective.

In the realm of foreign affairs we shall continue to seek friendship and develop our relations with all countries irrespective of ideology or their political systems. Non-alignment will continue to be the fundamental basis of our approach to world problems and our relations with other countries. It will be our special endeavour to further strengthen our relations with neighbouring countries. With most of our neighbours we have friendly and co-operative relations. We have problems with some of them which we would like to settle peacefully and amicably on an equitable and honourable basis.

India and Pakistan are two great countries linked together by common history and tradition. It is their natural destiny to be friends with one another and to enter into close co-operation in many fields. Goodwill and friendship and mutual co-operation between these countries will not only be of immense benefit to them but will make a great contribution to peace and prosperity in Asia.

Far too long have India and Pakistan been at odds with one another. The unfortunate relations between the two countries have somehow had their repercussions on the relations between communities in the two countries, giving rise to tragic human problems. We must reverse the tide. This will require determination and good sense on the part of the Governments and peoples of both India and Pakistan. President Ayub Khan's recent broadcast showed both wisdom and understanding and it has come just at the appropriate time. However, a great deal of patience will be necessary.

It had always been our desire to establish friendly relations with China. But all our efforts were nullified by the Government of the Peoples Republic of China. China has wronged us and deeply offended our Government and people by her premeditated aggression against us. Despite our strong feelings about this aggression we have shown our desire for a peaceful settlement by accepting *in toto* the Colombo Proposals. We adhere to them and it is for China to reconsider her atti-

tude towards these proposals as well as give up the anti-Indian campaign that has been carried on in China itself and amongst our friends in Asia and Africa.

For the greater part of this country the names of Gandhiji and Nehru have been symbols of the movement of subject peoples for freedom from colonial domination. We who have gone through our own struggle for freedom cannot but look with sympathy at peoples struggling for freedom anywhere. Our country has, for many years, been a stout champion of the freedom of dependent nations at the United Nations and elsewhere in the councils of nations. Unfortunately there are still some parts of the world where colonialism remains and where large sections of people are denied freedom and fundamental rights. We would consider it our moral duty to lend every support to the ending of colonialism and imperialism so that all peoples everywhere are free to mould their own destiny.

Our late Prime Minister was one of the founders of the Afro-Asian movement. We conceive of Afro-Asian solidarity not as an end in itself but as a means for achieving certain noble objectives. These are to work for the freedom of the people of Asia and Africa to build up the area of peace and understanding among all nations and to promote economic growth and higher living standards among our peoples. We seek no leadership of the Afro-Asian group. We are content to be humble collaborators with the sister nations of Africa and Asia in the common cause of world peace and freedom of peoples.

We have always been a staunch supporter of the United Nations. As a member of that august body India has undertaken its full measure of responsibility in all aspects of United Nations activities. My Government reaffirms its unflinching support for the United Nations. The United Nations is the one hope of the world for bringing peace and freedom to humanity. Towards the achievement of these goals India has played an active role in the past and will continue to do the same in the future.

The problem of problems that faces mankind today is the achievement of peace and disarmament. For countless generations mankind has been yearning for peace. The supreme task facing the United Nations is to ensure not only that war is banished but that war is made impossible. As President Johnson has said, a world without war would be the most fitting memorial to Jawaharlalji. We pledge ourselves, in co-operation with other peaceful nations of the world, to continue to work for the realisation of this ideal.

Before I conclude may I repeat that I am only too conscious of the magnitude of the tasks before us and the responsibility placed on my shoulders for the service of the people of my country? I approach these tasks and responsibilities in a spirit of humility and with love and respect for all my countrymen. I will try to serve them to the limit of my capacity. The memory of our departed leader is still fresh with us. With him has ended the great age which Gandhiji began and Jawaharlalji consolidated. We have now to build on the firm

foundations they have left behind. Let us then bend ourselves to the great task before us—an India free, prosperous and strong and a world at peace and without war—these would be the most fitting memorials to Gandhiji and Jawaharlal.

# *APPENDIX 2*

## FORCE WILL BE MET WITH FORCE*

FRIENDS: I want to speak to you tonight about the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The events of the last few days have caused us all deep concern and great anxiety. I would like to tell you first what has actually happened and how things stand today.

About a week ago, the Government received information that armed infiltrators from Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir had crossed the cease-fire line in civilian disguise and that they were indulging in sabotage and destruction at a number of places. During these few days, the raiders have attacked strategic places, such as police stations and petrol depots and they have obviously acted according to a plan prepared for them by those in Pakistan who are directing these operations. There is no doubt that this is a thinly disguised armed attack on our country organised by Pakistan and it has to be met as such. Our valiant security forces, both Army and Police, are meeting the situation firmly and effectively. Swift action has since been taken to locate the infiltrators. Several engagements have occurred at a number of places and heavy casualties have been inflicted. So far, 126 infiltrators have been killed. Our security forces have also captured 83 officers and men. Other groups have since been surrounded and are about to be apprehended. Mopping-up operations are now in progress and Pakistan's latest attempt at creating disorder in Kashmir is being crushed. No quarter will be given to saboteurs. We have, of course, to be continuously vigilant in Kashmir because the possibility of attempts being made to create further trouble cannot be ruled out.

Pakistan has, on the one hand, sought to deny its complicity and, on the other, she has put herself forward as the chief spokesman for the infiltrators. The world will recall that Pakistan had created a similar situation in 1947 and then also she had initially pleaded innocence. Later, she had to admit that her own regular forces were involved in the fighting.

Pakistan is trying to conjure up the spectre of some people in revolt; she is talking of some revolutionary council and of a lot of other things. All this is a mere figment of Pakistan's imagination. Pakistani propaganda is blatantly and completely untrue. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have shown remarkable fortitude. They still remember how

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* Broadcast to the Nation, New Delhi, August 13, 1965

the Pakistani raiders pillaged and plundered Kashmir on an earlier occasion. There is no revolution in Kashmir, nor is there any revolutionary council. The people of Jummu and Kashmir have, in fact, themselves given the lie to Pakistan's propaganda.

The more important question before us now is not that of these infiltrators and their activities, because we are quite clear about what to do with them. The real question is that of our relations with Pakistan.

In April last, they committed naked aggression on our Kutch border. We acted with great restraint and forbearance despite serious provocation. We left them in no doubt, however, that if they did not vacate the aggression forthwith, we would have to take requisite military steps to get the aggression vacated. Eventually, the Armed Forces of Pakistan had to go back from the Indian soil and it was reasonable to hope that our mutual relations might take a turn for the better.

In this context, it is amazing that Pakistan should have embarked upon yet another adventure. On this occasion, the method adopted and the strategy used show signs of a new tutelage, possibly a new conspiracy. Only one conclusion is now possible and it is this: Pakistan has probably taken a deliberate decision to keep up an atmosphere of tension. Peace apparently does not suit her intentions. We have, therefore, to reckon with this situation in a realistic manner.

We have to consider how best to deal with the dangers that threaten our country. We have also to state our views categorically so that there are no miscalculations.

If Pakistan has any ideas of annexing any part of our territories by force, she should think afresh. I want to state categorically that force will be met with force and aggression against us will never be allowed to succeed. I want also to tell our brothers and sisters in Kashmir that the people of the entire country stand solidly with them, ready to make any sacrifice for the defence of our freedom. I know that every young man in our country is prepared today to make even the supreme sacrifice so that India may continue to live with her head aloft and banner high.

When freedom is threatened and territorial integrity is endangered, there is only one duty—the duty to meet the challenge with all our might. We must all fully realise that the country faces its severest trial today. At this hour, across our vast borders are massed forces which threaten our continuance as a free and independent country. We have all to stand together firmly and unitedly to make any sacrifice that may be necessary. In normal times, we may well have our individual loyalties—loyalties to policies and programmes about which there can be genuine differences of opinion amongst different sections and groups. That is an essential part of our democratic set-up. But when our very freedom and sovereignty are threatened, all these loyalties have to be subordinated to that ultimate loyalty—loyalty to the Motherland. I appeal to all my countrymen to ensure that our unity is strengthened and our internal peace and harmony are not disturbed in any manner.

Anyone who acts to the contrary will be acting against the interests of the country. I want to make it known that we shall allow no quarter to anyone who indulges in anti-national activities.

In another two days, we shall complete 18 years of independence after centuries of foreign rule. Each year shows a thinning out of the generation which strove, struggled and suffered in order that the generations to come may live in freedom. Each year sees a higher proportion of our people for whom foreign rule is something to be read about in history books and not a part and parcel of their own personal experience. This is particularly true of the student community in schools and colleges. They are fortunate that they have lived their lives in freedom; but it would be unfortunate if they take freedom for granted, or forget that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

Undoubtedly, we are passing through perilous times. But these are also the times of great opportunities. With unity among ourselves, and with faith in our future, we should do all we can to preserve our freedom and sovereignty and should march ahead confidently towards the attainment of the national objectives which we have set for ourselves.

# *APPENDIX 3*

## WE MUST NOT SLACKEN*

AUGUST 5 is a date which has acquired a special significance in our history. It will be difficult for us to forget this date, at least for some time. The chain of events that started on August 5 is continuing even now. On that date, thousands of armed men from Pakistan entered Kashmir. They moved swiftly and created a dangerous situation, a situation which was dangerous not only for Kashmir but for all of us. You can imagine how serious a situation can become when five to seven thousand armed men invade a country. A few months ago, Mr. Bhutto said that Pakistan had a "master plan', for Kashmir and that they proposed to follow this plan step by step. We were aware of what Mr. Bhutto had said and therefore, had some inkling of what was in store. But we could never have imagined that Pakistan would try to put her "master plan" into action so soon after the Kutch agreement. You all know how particular we were that the Kutch problem should be solved through peaceful negotiations. We also signed an Agreement to this effect. It is most unfortunate—and it has been a great shock to me personally—that even while we were in the process of signing the Kutch Agreement, full-fledged preparations for an attack on Kashmir were going on in Pakistan. What could be more improper and perfidious than this? While we on our part were trying our best to solve all our boundary problems peacefully, Pakistan was preparing to attack our country on a much larger scale than the attack in Kutch. Obviously, Pakistan was only making a show of willingness to solve the Kutch dispute peacefully.

This was the background of the attack on Kashmir. It was natural for us to fight back with all our power and all our resources in an effort to repulse this attack. The task of our security forces was no easy one, for these infitrators came furtively in twos and threes taking cover in ravines and desolate mountainous tracks. Pakistan believed that the people of Kashmir would revolt against their Government. The armed infiltrators were convinced that as soon as they entered Kashmir, the Kashmiri people would throw in their lot with them and help them in overthrowing the Government, so that their land could become part of

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* Translation of the speech in Hindi made at Ramlila Grounds, New Delhi, September 26, 1965.

Pakistan. The armed infiltrators attacked police posts, tried to reach the airport, and made many attempts to set fire to villages and towns. While they were indulging in such activities, the people of Kashmir did not give them food or shelter and did not co-operate with them in any way whatsoever. They demonstrated more clearly than any argument could have done that Kashmir was an integral part of India, and that it had nothing to do with Pakistan.

In my judgement, it was a great blow to Pakistan that a territory which they had imagined would join Pakistan within two or three days did not do anything of the kind. It soon became clear to Pakistan that the people of Kashmir, far from helping the intruders, would withstand their attack and stoutly resist them to the last. When this scheme of sending infiltrators into Kashmir to create a "revolution" did not succeed, Pakistan resorted to the method of attacking with regular armed forces. As you all know, India did not indulge in aggressive activity, did not attack an inch of Pakistan's territory in the beginning. Even when they were sending armed men into Kashmir, we only took measures to prevent them from coming into our territory.

At first Pakistan's attack was a disguised one, and they persisted in saying that the trouble in Kashmir had been created by the people themselves. But in such matters truth cannot be concealed indefinitely, and Pakistan's intention became more than clear when they launched their fullscale attack in Chhamb with infantry divisions and a hundred tanks.

This was no border incident, and they crossed not only the cease-fire line but also the international border and entered the Chhamb territory of Jammu. Time was of the essence and we had to act quickly. Although Pakistan's attack on India was first launched in Chhamb, they had an eye on our territory of Punjab also. As you know, they made a rocket attack on Amritsar and tried to destroy the airport near Wagah.

President Ayub had been talking a great deal about the tanks and other military equipment Pakistan had acquired and had on many occasions boasted that if they decided to march to Delhi, it would be a walkover. The military situation created by Pakistan was such that our Forces had no choice but to advance in the Lahore sector.

The British Government criticised India bitterly for her action and accused her of attacking Pakistan but did not say that India had been attacked by Pakistan when thousands of armed infiltrators from Pakistan entered Kashmir. Nor did they say a word when Pakistan crossed the international border, or even when Pakistan launched her massive attack on Chhamb with heavy armour.

Pakistan's attack was so formidable and so swift that we could not afford merely to talk of defending ourselves. We had to take decisive, effective action, without losing time. The needs of the situation could no longer be answered by local action. We could not afford to endanger the freedom of our country; no country in the world would have allowed its freedom to be threatened as ours was. We have always held fast to the principle of peace, but in the situation that

was created, not to act would have been cowardice and sloth. The display of armed might we saw within our territory could be resisted only with arms. It is not customary to let out State secrets, but I can tell you that when our Generals consulted the Government about the situation, I told them firmly that there was no room for indecision, that they must go ahead and not flinch.

And the Indian Army did not flinch. They advanced in Sialkot, Kasur, Lahore and across the Rajasthan border. They took the town of Gadra and captured many posts and dug into their positions. The Security Council, and indeed the whole world, started to talk of peace. We have no objection to peace and do not want the conflict between Pakistan and India to become a conflagration where all the countries of the world have to come in. The world knows that we have time and again offered our services for peace-keeping operations. Our great leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, worked for peace all his life and on many occasions succeeded miraculously in averting war. We cannot suddenly forget these principles. We hold steadfastly to the ideals of peace in the world. We want to live in our country in peace, so that we can work for progress, so that we can fight the poverty of our people and build up a new society for them. We are content in our own country and do not want to grab anybody else's territory. Nothing could be farther from our minds than to become the cause of armed conflicts in the world. That is why we agreed at once when the question of peace and cease-fire was brought up. We had talks with the Secretary-General of the United Nations when he came here and told him that we would agree to a cease-fire. Even after Pakistan accepted the cease-fire, she continued air attacks and shelling on Indian positions and did not desist from trying to inch her way forward all along the border. It is for the United Nations or the Security Council to judge the appropriateness or otherwise of Pakistan's actions after the announcement of the cease-fire.

It has been said that it is we who have attacked Pakistan after the cease-fire. I want to say categorically that our armies have not attacked any part of Pakistan's territory anywhere, after the cease-fire. Of course, if they attack us, we have to resist them and repulse their attacks. But we on our part sincerely wish to maintain the cease-fire. Even afteer the cease-fire Pakistan has been making free use of the language of threats. Every day Mr. Bhutto makes menacing speeches. If the Security Council and the other big powers allow themselves to be pressurised by his speeches, it will create a very difficult situation for us. If Mr. Bhutto maintains that Pakistani forces will withdraw when the Kashmir issue is solved, I would like to submit to him that the Kashmir issue cannot be solved in this way. If Pakistan is not willing to withdraw her forces, our Jawans will also stay where they are.

The issues in the Kashmir dispute are too well known to need repetition. Pakistan demands that we should withdraw from Haji Pir, Tithwal and from Kargil. But are they not in unlawful occupation of the whole

of what they call "Azad Kashmir"? Is that a part of Pakistan? If you look at the old proposals and resolutions of the Security Council, you will see that the administration of the so-called "Azad Kashmir" is the responsibility of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan should first withdraw from the so-called "Azad Kashmir" and then talk to us of Tithwal and Kargil. Our stand on Kashmir is quite clear and Pakistan's language of threats will not do much good. Kashmir is a part of India and no part of India can be severed from it. It is as simple as that. It is unfortunate that Pakistan should have attacked India in order to grab Kashmir. There is no international law or practice whereby one country can attack another with all her armed might in order to force the solution of an issue which had already been brought before the Security Council. The Security Council and all the countries of the world must take cognisance of India's legal position and of our lawful rights while approaching the Kashmir issue. It is true that relations between India and Pakistan should be cordial and we have no objection to any country or power trying to bring the two countries closer together. After all Pakistan and India are neighbours and it is equally difficult for both of them to progress if they live in tension and with feeling of hostility towards each other. Good-neighbourliness is a proposition we endorse wholeheartedly. But it is very difficult for us to accept a situation wherein Kashmir is used as a basis for resolving the problems and tensions between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan wants the Security Council to meet again within a week. What would be the purpose of this meeting? Pakistan has not yet given effect even to the first part of the Security Council's resolution. What then is the point of going on with other things? Other problems can be taken up after the first part of the resolution is fulfilled. Mr. Bhutto seems very keen on hearing his own voice in the Security Council. Perhaps that is why he wants another Security Council meeting. What is the point of our attending another meeting of the Security Council when Pakistan is being allowed to disregard the first part of the resolution? We may have to consider whether we should attend such a meeting at all. We hope that the Security Council will deliberate carefully before it calls an emergency meeting. The Security Council's proposals should first be carried out faithfully and only then should another meeting be called, if it is considered necessary. In that case we shall certainly attend the meeting, take part in the debate and put forth our point of view.

I want to appeal to you not to let the cease-fire make you complacent and slack. It would be a great mistake for us to feel that the conflict with Pakistan has been resolved. We must be prepared for everything. We do not know what form this conflict may take; and we must always remember China's threat. We are facing a grave situation. Although there is no cause for panic, I am sure all of you can well imagine how much discipline such a situation calls for. We must be prepared to face difficulties, willing to do without things, willing to sacrifice. We must become deeply aware of the threat that hangs

over us and fashion our daily lives accordingly. It is possible that we may have to delay some of our plans and schemes for progress in order to concentrate on defence preparations. We have to strengthen our defences and maintain our equipment in good order, even if we have to do without food. I do not say that we will be in such a situation but a situation may arise when we would have to eat much less than we do now. Defence will have to be our first priority for some time to come. There are some friendly countries who want to help us and we welcome their support. But even if they do not help us, we have to be prepared to subsist on the barest minimum and meet our defence needs somehow or the other. I want every village in this country to be aware of the situation, to be alive to the need for producing more foodgrains in the country. We shall have to cut down the cash crops and concentrate on wheat, paddy, jowar, bajra and such crops as much as possible. The whole country must be united in the resolve to produce more and to improve agriculture on the one hand and, on the other, to consume as little as possible. I would advise those who are not vegetarians to consume less rice and wheat. The lavishness in hotels and restaurants, where one course is followed by another, must come to a stop. We must eat only as much as is absolutely necessary. I am telling you this with the greatest seriousness because the need to save food has become crucial to our very existence in the situation today. Even the feasts that are customary in marriages and festivals must be restrained and held on a small-scale if they must be held. We must make an earnest effort to save in whatever way we can.

Another thing I would like to stress is that the psychology of hoarding must be nipped in the bud. Many people think they are doing nothing wrong if they keep enough grain for a month or two in their homes in these uncertain times, but this is not so. It would be grossly unfair to the country if we kept even one more grain of wheat or rice than we normally needed. What are we afraid of? What is achieved if a handful of people manage to protect themselves against shortages? What is the point of saving our lives at the expense of thousands of our countrymen? It is much better to die. If we understand all this, we shall certainly be able to defend ourselves. When I returned from Russia, I told you about the city of Leningrad where 500,000 people died in the defence of their city. Many of them died of starvation. I do not say that this grim picture is about to become a reality in our country, but at the same time we must try to produce enough for our needs within the country. Each man should willingly share with his brother, with his neighbour, whatever he has, so that nobody need starve. This is what we must resolve today.

It is true that the Government must face its own responsibilities and fulfil the needs of the country. But I would like to appeal to all traders that in the matter of prices and the price-line, it does not behove us today to talk of legal restrictions and disciplinary action. The situation demands that the traders must hold the price-line. The traders and dealers can be of great help and service in this hour. If they guarantee

price stability, the other tasks that are before us today can be carried out without unnecessary complications.

I know that we are capable of combining our efforts for Civil Defence in a most effective manner. I would like to congratulate those who made such successful Civil Defence arrangements in the city of Delhi, all within two or three days. The whole city was plunged in darkness but not a single untoward incident was reported. The civilian population, including children, were intent on making the blackout a success. This is a time when we must not depend on official organisers. Each one of us must feel responsible for our own Civil Defence, and prepare ourselves coolly and calmly to face bombing raids or any other kind of attack. In such eventualities, we must not give way to panic and run for our lives but stand firm, ready to be of help. Each city, each town, each village in the country must prepare itself. I am confident that the young people of our country will come forward and contribute their effort in Civil Defence most ungrudgingly.

I want to say one more thing. The B.B.C. has said that since India's Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri is a Hindu, he is ready for war with Pakistan. There is no doubt that I am a Hindu. Mir Mushtaq Sahib who is presiding over this meeting is a Muslim. Mr. Frank Anthony who has also addressed you is a Christian. There are also Sikhs and Parsis here. The unique thing about our country is that we have Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis and people of all other religions. We have temples and mosques, gurdwaras and churches. But we do not bring all this into politics. We are not working to make India a Hindu State or Muslim State. This is the difference between India and Pakistan. Whereas Pakistan proclaims herself to be an Islamic State and uses religion as a political factor, we Indians have the freedom to follow whatever religion we may choose to worship in any way we please. So far as politics is concerned, each one of us is as much an Indian as the other. It is a distortion of facts to accuse India of hostility to Pakistan on account of the narrow point of view of religion. After all China is not an Islamic State! So far as the territorial integrity of India is concerned, we have taken the same stand with China as we have taken with Pakistan. If China attacks us, we shall resist her and defend ourselves with all the resources at our command, no matter how great her might. The defence of the country has nothing to do with religion; it is a matter of the freedom and sovereignty of the Motherland. Not an inch of our land shall be severed from us. We must have it and be prepared to sacrifice our lives in the effort.

In this crisis there has been a great demonstration of unity and discipline in the country. This has meant a new upsurge of life and I have full faith that the morale of our people will remain as high as it is today. Anyone who undermines this morale in any way will be playing into Pakistan's hands. Whoever brings up internal dissensions, whoever breaks the peace and unity of the country will be considered a traitor. We must guard our unity and cherish it. If we are united

and resolved, if we are able to feed ourselves through our own efforts, if we are prepared for sacrifices to strengthen our defences, I have no doubt that our army will be able to defend our freedom wherever that freedom may be threatened.

Yesterday, I visited some of our wounded Jawans and officers in the military hospital. They have been badly hurt but I did not see a single tear or even a sad face. However serious the injury or wound was, each of them was smiling and cheerful. An officer whose leg had been amputated told me with pride that he had shot down a Pakistani officer after his leg received the injury on the battlefield. I was very much moved to see another officer, Bhupinder Singh, whose whole body was covered with blood. Even now it is difficult to put a piece of cloth anywhere on his body. He was lying in bed with eyes closed. He apologised to me for not being able to stand up to show respect to the Prime Minister who was visiting him. He told me that he destroyed seven enemy tanks and that his Unit had knocked out thrity-one. He also said that he was sure to get well again but even if he did not, it did not matter because the country can now hold its head high. I told him how proud the country was of him, how deeply grateful the people of the country were for the way in which the Indian Armed Forces had faced the enemy. Every child, every man and woman in the country has the deepest respect for the men of the Indian Army, for the Air Force pilots and other fighters. The whole country is deeply aware of the sacrifices they have made and cherishes them. We shall stand by our Armed Forces with all our strength and make it possible for them to lead the country from victory to victory. I believe that justice is on our side, that fairness is on our side, that truth is on our side and that the final victory will be ours.

*Epilogue*

# A TRYST IN TASHKENT

MAYBE, this is the ideal end to a fruitful, meteoric career—a glorious exit: the curtain coming down, with applause still ringing in the ears. But to his country Shastri's sudden death, so inopportune, was a tragedy and a calamity.

That Fate did not spare him to follow through his triumph at Tashkent and gather in the fruit of his labours lends a tinge of poignant irony to the tragedy. It is not a good omen for the Tashkent Agreement.

It is a tragedy not only because Shastri will not be there to implement policies which he alone, as their author, effectively could, but also because he was now, at last, set firmly on the road to success and achievement.

After some fourteen months of struggle up the hill, Shastri had reached the plateau, and had shown promise of attaining even greater heights—if only Fate had spared him. For he was now embarked, with great self-confidence, on the task of tackling, and possibly successfully solving, the many intractable problems facing his country—the Kashmir question, Indo-Pakistani differences, the Chinese menace, a redefinition of India's foreign policies, the Naga demand, the language issue, the chronic food problem.

Starting as a "dark horse", Shastri had, in eighteen months, won confidence and respect all round, at home and in the international arena. His own country, not excluding the opposition parties, had developed affection and faith in him that would implicitly trust to him the destinies of the country.

Abroad, whether in Moscow or in Washington, they found in him a dependable, wise statesman, with firm, clear-cut and constructive views on international problems. Somewhat distrusted at the outset, Shastri had soon won the Kremlin's full

confidence and respect. Indeed, never before were relations between Moscow and New Delhi closer and warmer. In Washington, the esteem for this "little man from India" had risen from day to day as they discovered in him a personality of great strength of character and political wisdom and a genuine man of peace.

It was such a noble career, so full of promise both for himself and for his country, that was so suddenly cut off, at the conclusion of a historic and triumphant trip to the Uzbek capital. This is the piognancy of the grief that overwhelmed the Indian people when they read with shocked bewilderment in the morning papers of January 11, 1966, the happy news of the success of Shastri's mission side by side with the sad tidings of his death in Tashkent.

For there can be no doubt that the Tashkent Declaration of January 10, 1966, between President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Shastri was a great feather in the latter's cap. In subscribing to it, Shastri had faithfully kept the promises he had made to his people, on the eve of the fateful trip. And his people were preparing a hero's welcome for him on his return to his country.

Instead, Fate willed otherwise—"Home they brought the warrior dead", draped in the Tricolour. And a grief-stricken, grateful people bestowed on him, posthumously, the highest honour within their power to give him. President Radhakrishnan in his broadcast to the nation, commisserating with the people on their great loss, announced the award of "Bharat Ratna" to Lal Bahadur.

The Tashkent Declaration had prepared the atmosphere for the turning of a new leaf in the India-Pakistan relations, thereby paving the way for the resolution of the many differences and disputes, thorny and minor, between the two countries.

Amidst much gloom and pessimism, Shastri went to Tashkent pledged to forge friendly relations between the two neighbours, India and Pakistan, and to that end to get President Ayub to renounce war as a method to solve mutual differences. He achieved those noble objectives at Tashkent.

The pessimism prevailing at the outset was not ill-founded.

It was clear—and Bhutto made no bones about it—that President Ayub was going to Tashkent to put India in the wrong in the eyes of Moscow too and score points against her over Kashmir.

Pakistani spokesmen averred that their President was flying to the Uzbek capital to discuss Kashmir with Shastri, and nothing else. Later, it was indicated that he was prepared to talk about other Indo-Pak differences too, provided Kashmir was taken up first.

On the other hand, Shastri declared to his people, to President Ayub and Premier Kosygin of the USSR, that India's sovereignty (which was involved in the Kashmir question) was not negotiable, and that the two countries should first agree to renounce war in the two countries' mutual relations, though in that context he would not refuse to discuss the Kashmir problem.

Here were two parallel lines that could never meet. Hence the universal despair over the outcome of the Tashkent summit. From the beginning, the talks thus seemed doomed. At the end of five days of negotiations, all reports from Tashkent indicated that the conference had deadlocked on the familiar, anticipated lines—Pakistan insisting on Kashmir being put on the agenda and at the top of it, and India sticking to her guns and refusing to have the subject on the agenda, on the ground that it was her internal problem.

On Saturday, January 8, the talks were pronounced as having collapsed. "Unless a miracle happens, the Tashkent Conference should end tomorrow on an unmistakable note of disagreement," said one paper. "Not unexpectedly, the talks have run into deadlock," reported another. "There is still no meeting ground," announced a third.

Sunday witnessed hectic, even frantic activity in the Uzbek capital. Mr. Kosygin shuttled between the Indian and Pakistani camps exchanging drafts, suggesting amendments and compromises acceptable to either side, till late into the night.

It was long past midnight before the Soviet Premier's labours were crowned with success. Even then, every one thought the three parties involved, that is, the Indian, Pakistani and Soviet delegations, were busy hammering out a for-

mula that could put on paper the "agreement to differ" between India and Pakistan.

The surprise was all the greater, therefore, when on Monday morning the darkening clouds suddenly rolled away, and the sun began to shine on the summit talks at Tashkent.

At 4 p.m., local time, with Premier Kosygin beaming down with an air of a proud midwife, Prime Minister Shastri and President Ayub Khan signed a joint declaration that was a pleasant surprise to the immediate audience as well as to those in India and Pakistan anxiously watching the developments in the "Neutral Villa".

So far as India is concerned, the positive achievements of this Joint Declaration are: first, the text does not mention Kashmir anywhere in it, and, secondly, gets India and Pakistan jointly to declare "not to have recourse to force and to settle their disputes through peaceful means."

These were the two points on which Shastri had insisted upon right through. That the Declaration invoked the United Nations Charter as witness to the joint renunciation of war-like methods to settle their mutual differences should not detract from the fact that the two countries have solemnly taken the pledge, with the Soviet Premier, Mr. Kosygin, as an attesting witness, and with the entire world watching.

The Declaration further "agreed that relations between India and Pakistan shall be based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of each other." This is an important point scored by India, so frequently harassed by Pakistani propaganda directed at inciting her minorities to discontent and rebellion, apart from covering her stand on Kashmir.

Shastri told a press conference, following the signing of the Joint Declaration, that "India had made it clear at the talks that the sovereignty of the country is not negotiable. We have told this to Pakistan in regard to Kashmir."

As a *quid pro quo*, and in implementation of the U.N. resolution, however, India had to agree in the Joint Declaration to the withdrawal of "all armed personnel" (including those in the Uri-Poonch, Tithwal and Kargil areas), not later than February 25, 1966, to the positions they held on August

5, 1965. This was indeed, in a way, the condition India had insisted upon, all along, at the U.N.

Pakistani spokesmen, on the other hand, contended that the term "all armed personnel" did not include the so-called freedom fighters in Kashmir and that, further, the Declaration opened the way for the Security Council to assert itself after the completion of the withdrawal of forces, to initiate political discussions for a Kashmir settlement.

What matters however is the spirit of the thing. If the spirit in which the Declaration was propounded at Tashkent persevered in its translation into practice, the difference in its interpretation on either side would pale into insignificance. It is in this phase of follow-through, therefore, that Shastri's absence—his resoluteness of purpose and persuasiveness—will be felt most in both countries.

Shastri was convinced that "our agreement has definitely reduced tension" and he described the Tashkent meeting as a "unique experiment in international diplomacy." He then went on to declare: "The whole world will, I hope, acclaim the Tashkent declaration as an example of tackling long-standing problems which need not stand in the way of mutual understanding and improvement of mutual relations."

New Delhi's approach to the Declaration is indicated by the Indian delegation's statement to the press, following the Joint Declaration. "The significance of the Tashkent declaration is not that it resolves all outstanding problems between India and Pakistan, but that despite the existence of differences, the two countries have pledged to live together in peace as good neighbours," said the Indian statement. "It is in this spirit that the subject of Kashmir was discussed. The two heads of Government re-state the respective position of India and Pakistan on this matter."

One gets a peep into Pakistan's interpretation of the Declaration in her Foreign Secretary, Aziz Ahmed's observations at a press conference. "Now, much will depend upon the future —how the Tashkent declaration is used to solve the Kashmir problem," he remarked.

In these differing approaches to the Declaration lie the seeds of future trouble between the two countries. It is for

this reason that one so much regrets the exit from the scene of the architect of the Declaration on the Indian side, so indispensable to preserve its spirit in its enforcement.

"I call it (Shastri's death) tragic for the sake of India as well as for the sake of relationship between India and Pakistan, because basically these are really matters of relationship between individuals in positions of responsibility." Such was Ayub's reaction to the tragedy.

The Pakistani President added, "He and I had established very good understanding with each other. I know he wanted peace and you can be rest assured we also want peace. Mr. Shastri died in the cause of peace."

Somewhat presciently, Walles Hangen in his book on India observed that the question really was not "After Nehru who?" but "After Nehru's successor who?" The choice is indeed excruciatingly difficult. Let us hope, and pray, that the Congress Party will, once again, rise to the occasion.

Once again, the people's eyes are rivetted on Kumarswami Kamaraj, the Congress Party President. He can be trusted to keep a cool head and pull the party and the nation out of this crisis, too, and pick out the right person to succeed Shastri, even as he did eighteen months ago, when he got one to succeed Nehru.

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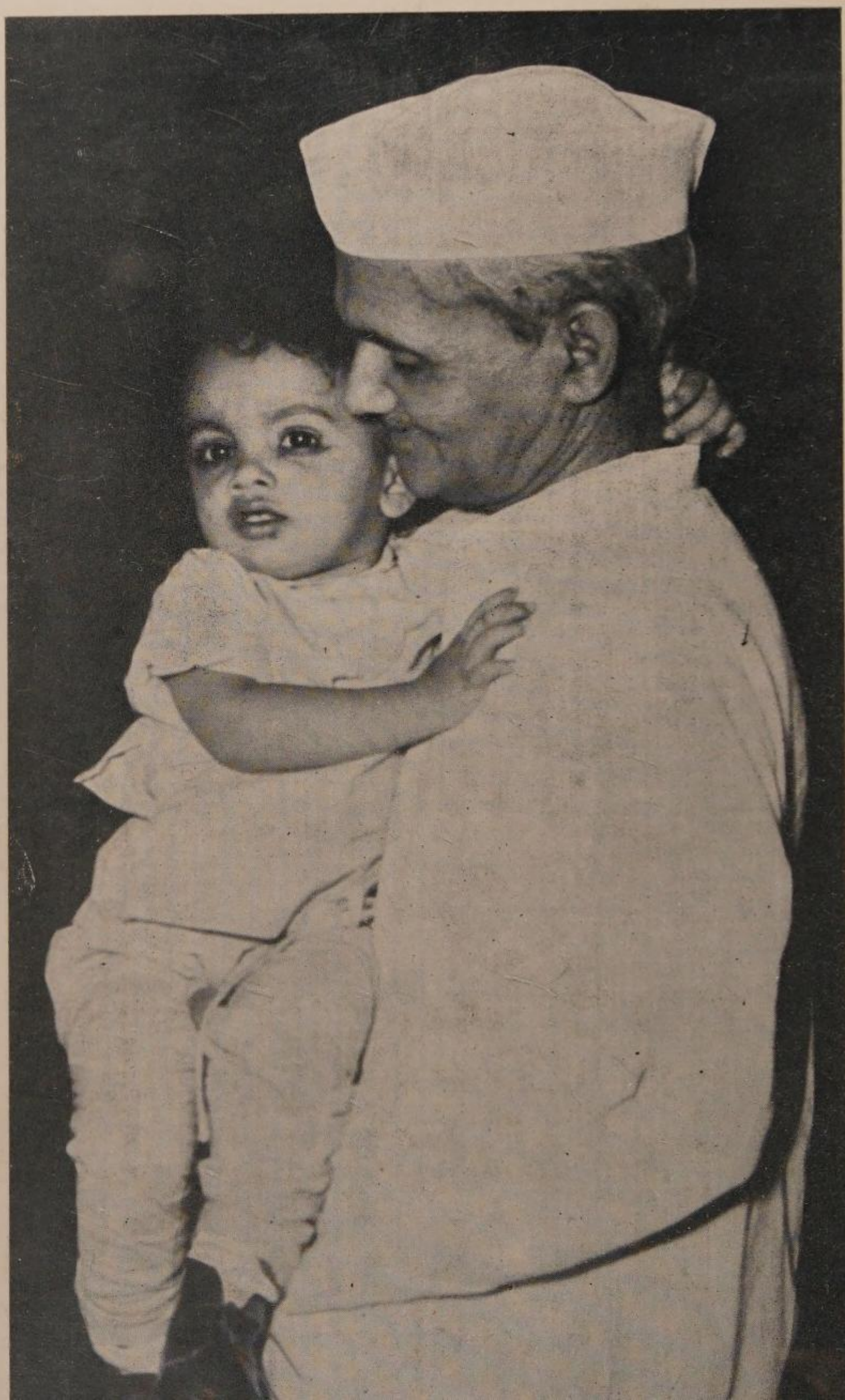
D. R. MANKEKAR, former Editor, *Indian Express*, Bombay, is a well-known political commentator of India. He has been a shrewd and farsighted observer of the Indian political scene for the last three decades. As a front-rank reporter he had a grandstand view of all the major events in India's recent history. In 1947 he covered the Mountbatten negotiations and the Transfer of Power in New Delhi, and then the Partition holocaust that immediately followed. He reported the Kashmir fighting in 1947-48. He accompanied the late Jawaharlal Nehru to the U.S.A. in 1949, to Indonesia in 1950, to China in 1954 and President Rajendra Prasad to Soviet Russia in 1959. He covered the Indo-China Conference in 1954 and Disarmament Conference in 1962 at Geneva. He was a war correspondent in Burma from 1943 to 1945. He is the author of *Goa Action*, *Red Riddle in Kerala* and *Twenty-two Fateful Days*.